

Al-Ilahiyyat Volume 1

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This book elaborates on concepts such as recognition of Allah (SwT), His names, and operative and descriptive attributes. On each of these topics, it rebuttals views held by other schools of thought within Islam, both historic and contemporary, and provides evidence from the Holy Quran, the Sunnah and traditions from the Holy Household to support its position.

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Category:

God & His Attributes [5]

Featured Category:

Introducing Islam [6]

Author's Foreword

In the Name of Allah, the most Gracious, the most Merciful

Blessed and praised is the best of His (SwT) creation, Muhammad (S), and so are the elites from among his progeny and the selected ones from among his companions.

The need of public and private Islamic circles, I mean those interested in knowledge and sciences, for editing the principles-related requirements on which the Islamic creed is based and for purifying them from impurities, after views about them had spread here and there according to the diversity of inclinations and desires.

The truth in issues relevant to the creed's beliefs has almost been buried and its candles put out, except in the chests of special ones from among those who bear it, who are its bastions, those who purged their souls of their own unholy desires, cleansing their hands of the dirhams (cash) of the men of authority.

In order to fill this terrifying vacuum, His Holiness the *allama*, our mentor, Professor Jafar Subhani Tabrizi, may Allah (SwT) protect him and elevate him to a high station, undertook a serious task, drawing a curtain on his comfort and rest, so he was equipped for lofty undertakings. He labored for years, actually decades, during which he abandoned his soul's desires and pursuits till he achieved what is recorded in psalms' verses, diving deeply in pursuit of everything that is veiled till he reached it.

Then he over-poured the gist of what he inhaled of the fountain of the Book of Allah, the Sunnah of His Prophet (S) and his guiding progeny, as well as the sublime rules of philosophy and wisdom. Through the grace of Allah (SwT), Praise belongs only to Him, and His boon on myself, I received it with full awareness, exerting in controlling its pursuits my very best efforts, so much so that it came out in your hands a tablet shining like Venus in the sky as high as Capricorn. It is a book in which the roots of pursuits related to the creed and its branches are compiled. It solves problems and dispels doubts. It is deep in thought, solid and clear in statements, precise in classification and definition.

Allah (SwT), Praise belongs to Him, is the One to Whom we plead to accept this deed, to enable the offspring of our generation and of those of the coming ones to benefit from it, to make it a lantern leading to what is right, a lighthouse for guidance, through His boons, favors and greatness; Allah (SwT) blesses Muhammad (S) and the pure progeny of Muhammad (S).

Hassan Muhammad Makki

Holy Qum on the 4th of Holy Month of Shawwal, 1408 (May 21, 1988)

Author's Foreword For The New Edition

In the Name of Allah, the most Gracious, the most Merciful

Thanks are due to Allah for His care.

Since seeing the light, the book titled *Al-Ilahiyyat* was met with a great deal of acceptance and circulation by scholarly assemblies due to the attributes it enjoys the most significant of which are the

following:

1. Methodology of Submission

We have submitted researches of the principles (of the creed) in the form of a series according to a method that agrees with rational and logical sequences of topics of logic, referring each research to its suitable place. We started with general discussions about knowing the creed and its principles, then we looked into the evidences that point out to the Maker, and then to His Attributes. In them, we listed researches of justice, mutability, destiny, fate, determinism and the freedom to choose. Then we discussed the general Prophetic mission, the specific Prophetic mission, imamate and the Return.

2. Research's Progression

In our discussion of each principle, we reviewed its linguistic definitions, then its idioms. If it has necessary logical precepts, we submitted them, such as the issue of mentally judging what is good and what is ugly with regard to researches in wisdom. Then we delved into the root of the research, stating the branches of its fruits, the most important questions about it, the questions that may be raised about it, answering them all.

An example is the conclusion of the research of the message's universality and the conclusion from among general researches relevant to the Prophetic mission, the questions about the Imamate of al-Mahdi, peace be with him, after discussing them, and questions about the Return after submitting its researches, in addition to many others. This has granted the researches flexibility, coloring them with practicality and getting them out of the dry status of comparison.

An example for this sort is the submitting of samples and of analyzing them as is quite often noticed in the research about the Holy Quran being a miracle, in addition to submitting questions to the researcher so he may contemplate on answering them. In this process, we noticed in some places that the branches of some researches are elaborated on in a way the listing of which falls within the main researches, mandating the divergence among their parts and the loss of the title and the main idea in them.

For this reason, we have had to list them separately in a research in special chapters as we have done with the topic of *al-badaa* (mutability) and that of decree and destiny, as well as the research of obligation versus freedom of choice. These are regarded as branches of the divine wisdom. We, therefore, listed each of them in a special chapter.

3. Comprehensive Deduction

This is clear from the title of the book. We reviewed the evidences in the light of the guidance of reason, of the Holy Book and of the purified Sunnah. We also reviewed the evidences of the scholars of logic

and of philosophers. We have discussed whatever needs a discussion, making this book unique.

There are other characteristics that the kind researcher can notice, such as the ease of expression, the pursuit of the simplest meaning, and the avoiding of complication and ambiguity.

When the book was printed, all its copies were sold out immediately, so it was reprinted twice in its original form, and all of this took place in only a couple of years. During this time period, it has been facilitated for us through a favor of the Almighty to correct and explain many of its statements. We have fully edited the book by setting up Indices for its Quranic verses, Prophet's traditions, verses of poetry, renown personalities, references, etc.

Due to the book's large size, we were of the view to divide it into four volumes instead of two large ones so it could be easier to handle and to benefit from.

Here, we have to remind you that we prepared the book titled *Nadariyyat al-Marifa* (Theory of Knowledge), which we compiled from the lectures of *allama* Professor Subhani, may his shade prolong, to be a prelude for this book; therefore, it ought to be regarded as paving the way for studying this group of beliefs and it must not be overlooked.

In conclusion, I find it incumbent on me to thank my spiritual son, Sheikh Rashad Shuman al-Amili, may Allah look after him, for the effort which he exerted in extracting and organizing the book's Indices, and to thank the International Center for Islamic Studies for its effort to present the book in its new outfit.

Praise is due to Allah, Lord of the Worlds.

Hassan Makki al-Amili

Holy Shawwal 1411 A.H./April 1991

Chapter 1: General Principle Precepts

In the Name of Allah, the most Gracious, the most Merciful

We would like to preface our logical researches by stating a number of useful precepts which are indispensable for realizing the reality of religion and its concept, its roots in the human nature, its role in man's life, in addition to recognized knowledge in Islam.

1. Man's Life and Moral Values

We cannot imagine anyone who has some power of reasoning and who still violates and opposes industrial progress; rather, such power leads him to support the technology that brings him comfort and

prosperity.

But the problem in this era of mankind's life stems from another position, which is: the West's use of this technology for the benefit of production and distribution while sacrificing ethics and human feelings in order to achieve this goal.

A Call Heard from Afar

During these critical circumstances with regard to any idealistic individual, people who have living consciences and enlightened hearts have started complaining about this status that surrounds man, dismissing the artificial life of the machine. They have felt that man has reached the lowest rung of moral values and that the life of the machine "has made the human energies and values a victim of production and distribution" and does not let him reach happiness at all.

Rather, it leads him to earning money and wealth quickly while, at the same time, it destroys values and principles, rendering them to loss. From this onset, these folks have tried to vest a spiritual outlook on man's life so the material life may be balanced with the moral one.

While blessing the step of these scholars, we would like to remind them that the Holy Quran has described the material life which is empty of spirituality and values as a vision that revolves between sports, diversion, decoration and boasting and ends up in the multiplication of wealth and offspring. The most Praised One has said,

"Know (all of) you that the life of this world is only play and amusement, pomp, mutual boasting and multiplying, (in rivalry) among yourselves, riches and children. Here is a similitude: Rain and the growth which it brings forth delight (the hearts of) the tillers; soon it withers; you will see it grow yellow; then it becomes dry, and it crumbles away. But there is, in the hereafter, a severe penalty (for the wrongdoers), and [there is also] God's forgiveness and (His) good pleasure (for His devotees). And what is the life of this world but goods and chattels of deception?" (Qur'an, 57:20)

You can see that He, the Praised One, divides material life into five parts as if the latter revolve round these steps:

1. Sporting
2. Diversion
3. Adornment and Beautification
4. Boasting
5. Accumulation of Wealth and Offspring

Scholars believe that each of these parts occupies a measure of man's lifetime then thrusts to the next part according to the completion of his age and the strengthening of his energies. Perhaps each one of them consumes eight years of one's lifetime; the fifth part continues with him thereafter up to the conclusion of his life and does not part with him till death.

This sacred verse, moreover, compares the life which is empty of values to a green plant the greenness and goodness of which do not last: Soon, the green plant turns yellow from which one is repelled.

The similitude of one who is drowned in the quagmire of matter is like this same plant: One starts his life with greenness and goodness, then he settles in the end as a stench in a deep pit of the earth save one who conjoined his material life with a spiritual life which does not come to a conclusion by his death and the departure of his soul from his body.

The Holy Quran also portrays the material life in another way: It says,

"The unbelievers' deeds are like a mirage in sandy deserts which are parched with thirst [and which he] mistakes for water; until when he comes to it, he finds it to be nothing. But he finds Allah (ever) with him, and Allah will pay him his account, and Allah is swift in reckoning" (Qur'an, 24:39).

Material life, in its freshness, manifests itself as a realistic thing that has elegance and goodness. It lures one just like a thirsty person is lured by a mirage. When he reaches the end of his lifetime, he comes to know that it was nothing realistic with which his heart would feel comfortable.

Human life undertakes the sound path if it interacts with the spiritual side so that religion, values and ethics may assume a lofty status in his life just as his material life has this anticipated status. This reality, that is, one's attitude towards religion, manifests itself if we familiarize ourselves with two matters:

1. What is religion? What is its reality?
2. What is its role in man's life?

2. What is Religion? What are its Roots in the Human Nature?

Religion does not attempt to take humans back to ignorance and backwardness. Rather, it is an intellectual revolution that leads man to perfection and elevation in all fields. These fields are nothing but its own four dimensions:

- A. Correcting and cultivating ideologies and beliefs from whims and superstitions
- B. Improving social relationships
- C. Abolishing racial and ethnic differences

Man reaches these four goals in the shade of belief in Allah. Such a belief never stops being aware of responsibility, below is the explanation of this statement.

In the first field, I mean reforming ideologies and the creed, we say: A rationalizing individual cannot live without a creed. Not even those who vest upon their method the stamp of apostasy and raise their voices with slogans of atheism can live without a creed as they explain the cosmos and life. Here below, religion's theory about the reality of the cosmos and life is presented for you:

Religion interprets the cosmic reality and all material systems as the masterpieces of a High Existing One Who created matter, formed it and defined it with laws and limits, subjecting it to a system of precision. The Maker is not similar to what He makes; the Giver is not the same as the taker.

It also interprets human life as having come on the cosmic page not randomly, and mankind was not created for nothing. Rather, there is a higher goal for having been created on this planet; a goal arrived at in the shade of the teachings of the prophets and guides who were all sent by the Creator in order to guide His creation.

This is religion's interpretation of the reality of the cosmos, the secret of life. But a materialist tries to interpret the cosmos differently saying:

"The first matter is innately ancient, and it is the one that granted itself systems; it has no purpose, nor does man who lives therein."

In other words, according to the theory of the religious individual, the cosmos has a beginning and an end; its existence came from Allah, Praise to Him, just as its end, under the label of the Return, is also up to Allah Almighty.

But the cosmos, according to the theory of the materialist, lacks the "beginning and the end", that is, he is unable to sketch its beginning or answer these questions: How did it become a reality? How was it made and brought into being? Rather, whenever you ask him, he answers you with "I do not know". He also cannot explain its end and purpose. If you ask him about that, he will answer by saying, "I do not know".

Moreover, this world according to the materialist philosopher is like a pierced manuscript. Leaflets fell from its beginning to its end, tossing it into the frame of ambiguity; therefore, man does not know its beginning or its end. The materialist philosopher is ignorant of the world's beginning and conclusion, and no answer comes out of him save "I do not know".

In order to rephrase the above in a third statement, the three following questions have lingered in man's mind since he distinguished his right hand from the left; and these are:

1. Where did it come from?

2. Where is it going?

3. Why was it created?

These three questions are answered by the religious philosopher with solid answers which will become quite clear in this dissertation, and they are summed up thus. The beginning came from Allah, and the end of the course is Allah, the most Praised One:

"We belong to Allah, and to Him shall we return" (Qur'an, 2: 156).

The goal is to be adorned with values and ethical principles, and to be characterized by His Names and Attributes, Praise to Him. But the materialist is unable to answer these questions and does not bring forth anything convincing.

Based on this, we have said that religion has a role in correcting ideologies and doctrines. While making a comparison between the religious ideology and the materialistic system in answering these three questions, one comes to know that intellectual perfection is achieved in the shade of religion because it unveils broad horizons before his mentality and way of thinking, whereas the materialist fills one's mind with ignorance and ambiguity, even leads him to superstitions.

How can the matter grant its own self-systems? Is it possible that a union can be made between the cause and the causation, the doer and the deed, the one who causes and whatever he causes?

This much is relevant to religion's role in the field of correcting ideology and belief.

In the second field, what is relevant to religion nurturing lofty principles for ethics, we say that religious beliefs are regarded as the balance of ethical principles. Adherence to values and to their cultivation never stops being one of the difficulties and pains which man finds difficult to bear except when the spiritual factor facilitates them and removes their difficulty for him, such as sacrificing along the path of righteousness and justice, the safeguarding of trusts and the assisting of the downtrodden.

These are some of the ethical principles the authenticity of which cannot be denied, but embodying them in the society requires pains and faces difficulties, and it follows deprivation of some pleasures. So, what guarantee is there to achieve these principles?

To believe in Allah, the Praised One, and that the implementation of each ethical principle yields a great reward which man earns in the life hereafter, is the best factor for attracting man and making him eager to carry it out and thus be its embodiment during his short life (on earth). Without such a belief, ethics would become shreds of advice and dry admonishments: There is no guarantee that they will be acted upon.

In this regard, Will Durant, the contemporary historian¹, says, "Had it not been for religion, ethics would have manifested themselves more like economic exchanges, and the goal behind them would have

been winning temporal success, so much so that had success and winning been the antitheses of values, they would have swerved from them due to the goal behind them being on the side of non-values. Instead, it is the religious belief that leaves the sense of responsibility in the spirit of man."²

In the third field, which is relevant to firming social relationships, we would like to state in it what we stated in support of lofty ethics. The religious doctrine supports the social principles because the religious person regards them as obligations, and man will by himself be obligated to function according to them and to implement them.

But such principles among those who are not religious are not adhered to except through the imposition of a material force. At that time, the social principles do not enjoy any executive guarantee, and this is observed by those who have witnessed the way of life of materialistic nations that do not commit themselves to a beginning or to an end.

As regarding the fourth field, I mean the abolishment of excessive racial and ethnic differences imposed on the shoulders of the downtrodden through force, authority, enticement, ignorance and the distortion of facts, we say that religion regards all humans as having been created for one purpose. Everyone, as far as the materialist is concerned, is innately and essentially like all other teeth of the comb, and he does not see any sense in discriminating or distinguishing or looking high at some while looking down at others. Moreover, he sees no sense in the presence of people who are bloated as others perish due to starvation and deprivation.

These are the four fields in which religion plays a role and where it has a clear impact. Is it right, having halted at these amazing impacts, that we should neglect searching for it, placing it in a corner of oblivion?

But there is something quite interesting to which we would like to attract the reader's attention. Not every doctrine using the label of religion is able to create these legacies and be innovative. Rather, these can be handled by any religious doctrine based on reason, one that reaches us through truthful prophets.

It is in such a doctrine that we find motion and life, and it is in an image other than itself that religion becomes superstitious beliefs manifesting themselves in the form of monasticism, negative inclinations and other bad influences which we sense in religious doctrines that have nothing to do with inspiration or with men of a true creed.

When the Western thinker accuses religion of being a factor of backwardness and degeneration, one that opposes progress and ascendance, he aims at such religious doctrines.

There is something else, which is interesting, too. A true creed abolishes the negative differences that are not relevant to logical foundations. As regarding the positive distinctions which are not separate from members of mankind, these are not abolished at all. Just as the fingers of the same hand differ from each other, humans likewise differ with regard to the power of reason, intellect, movement and activity.

The differences that stem from man's own nature are incapable of deletion and alteration, and what religion rejects and deletes from life's sphere are the distinctions that stem out of power and authority.

Up to here, we have come to know religion's true aspects, and it is time now to get to know its roots in man's innate nature.

Religion and Disposition

Believing in the principle and going beyond nature is one of the instinctive matters in which man's creation was kneaded just as were many inclinations and instincts.

I can say that in general, man's realizations are divided into two kinds:

1. Realizations that are born out of external factors about man's existence. Without these realizations, mankind would never have become familiar with factors such as physical, chemical and engineering laws.
2. Realizations that stem from within man and his disposition without an external factor interfering to inspire them, such as man's self-knowledge, his sense of hunger and thirst, desire to get married at a certain age and the desire for money and position during periods of his lifetime. These types of knowledge, if you wish you could call them senses, stem out of man's inner self and the depths of his existence. Psychologists claim that the inclination towards a principle falls under this sort of knowledge.

Psychologists believe that the human psyche has four dimensions each of which represents a principle for certain effects:

- A. The spirit of exploration and fact-finding: This dimension of the human spirit creates sciences and branches of knowledge. Without it, since it was discovered on this planet, mankind would not have progressed the distance of one inch in sciences and in the exploration of facts.
- B. Love for goodness, the trend towards doing good deeds and for being righteous: For this reason, man finds in himself an inclination towards goodness and righteousness as well as deterrence from evil and corruption. Justice and equity are sought for everyone in general atmospheres and circumstances, whereas injustice and inequity are likewise abhorred. Add to these other actions that everyone describes as either good or evil, finding within the depths of his nature an inclination towards the first and a distancing from the other. This sort of sense is the principle behind values and human ethics.
- C. Man's passion for and relationship with goodness in fields of nature and industry: Precision and good things, artistic paintings and magnificent sculptures, all derive their elegance and goodness from this dimension. Everyone finds within himself a sure love for great gardens crowded with fragrant flowers and tall trees. He also finds in himself an inclination towards nice handicrafts and love for a good-looking human being. All these stem from this spirit with which man's nature is kneaded. At the same time, it

creates arts in various fields.

D. The religious feeling, which is ignited among the youths, at the age of adolescence: It calls man to believe that there is another world beyond this world from which this world derives its existence, and that man, in all his details, is attached to that world and is derived from it. This fourth dimension, which sciences of psychology discovered in the recent century and supported with various tests, is the focus of the Holy Quran even centuries ago. It refers to it in its sacred verses some of which are these:

"So set your face steadily and truly towards the faith: (Establish) God's handiwork according to the pattern on which He has made mankind" (Qur'an, 30:30).

The phrase "God's handiwork" is an explanation for the word "faith" which precedes it, and it clearly indicates that faith, in the sense believing in the Creator of the world and of mankind and that mankind's fate is in His hand, is something upon the acceptance of which mankind is created, and that man is created and made to have within him many inclinations and instincts.

"And [have We not] shown him the two ways [of right and wrong]?" (Qur'an, 90: 10).

That is, the Almighty has familiarized man with the path of goodness and with that of evil. It does not mean that such familiarizing is done through prophets; rather, it is done by the Praised One Himself even if it does not fall within the frame of prophets' teachings. This is so because the Praised One says prior to that verse:

"Have We not made a pair of eyes for him and a tongue, and a pair of lips?" (Qur'an, 90:8-9).

Everything originated from His boons, the most Praised One, when He created man and excelled in doing so.

If this proves anything, it proves that the theory which psychologists discovered is the focus of the inspiration in a very clear way, its conclusion is that religion, as a whole, is something instinctive: It grows as man grows and attains guidance, and it is subject to cultivation and nurturing as is the case with all inclinations and instincts.

3. Role of Religion in Life

It has become clear from what we have started about the reality of religion and its concept that it is something innate within man's nature, but we have to know its role in life, and that it has a significant impact on man's scientific and social life. So that the reader may be familiar with the impact of religion in these vital fields, we would like to point out some of them.

A. Religion: Innovator of Sciences

We are reviewing in this research the extent of impact of both opposing theories (theism versus atheism)

about how the world came to be in the discovering of facts and in the examining of the systems prevalent in it, without actually demonstrating bias towards the accuracy of either theory.

Undoubtedly, there are two juxtaposed theories in interpreting and explaining the world, which can never agree with each other on anything, and we will later explain which one of them is accurate. But our focus here is on determining the impact of each of the theories on the perfection and elevation of sciences:

First Theory: It depends on the world, from the atom to the constellation, on the innovation of a great mind, a good existent, an endless might and knowledge; He, in His knowledge and might, invented the world and granted it life.

Second Theory: The world's matter is perpetual. Neither knowledge nor might outside it has any making or influencing on it. Had there been systems, they are the outcome of coincident or such scientific suppositions which all share the statement that a blind and solid matter outpours on itself systems and laws.

We do not want to focus on either of these proposed theories because the truth will be manifested in the coming researches. Instead, we focus on knowing which of these theories urges mankind to investigate, stirring in his soul the spirit to look into himself.

Should we say that the world of the matter is an endlessly existing thing in its knowledge and power, having invented the matter and applied to it the systems and the laws due to His knowledge and the expanse of His might?

Or should we say that matter remains perpetual and has nothing to do with science and might. Had it had systems and laws, these are the outcomes of chance or of the antitheses that rule over it (over matter)? Is this not the hypothesis of materialist Marxists or something close to it?

Which of these theories bears an impact on the progress and perfection of sciences?

There is no doubt that if one who researches the cosmos is armed with the first theory, he will not find in himself any impetus to investigate or any sense that the world is not separated from systems and orders, and that he has to examine them.

This is the opposite of the researcher who embraces the second theory because chance or the antithesis among the parts of the matter does not produce for sciences the imminent taking place of systems and orders inside the matter so man could look for them. One Who researches the world's systems and examines the facts that prevail in it cannot lean on the study podium unless he believes in the first theory rather than in the other.

This is what we have advocated in the beginning of the research, that is, the religious doctrine creates sciences and encourages investigation.

We have come to this result: Religion, in the sense belief in the world results from knowledge and power (and knowledge *is* power), is a major factor in the progress of human sciences. It stirs in the investigating individual the spirit of diving deeply and in contemplating.

Yes, there is a question which may entertain the reader's mind: There are many groups of advocates of materialism, such as those who discovered the secrets and systems of nature; had atheism hindered the steps of investigation and progress, how could these have reached their discoveries and facts?

The answer is this: The slogans of these individuals, even though they bear the mark of atheism, are only on their tongues; as for their hearts, these beat differently. In other words, they believe deep in heart in the world being subjected to a greater force that applies to its systems and laws, the force that they are about to discover and with which about to become familiar. Had it not been for such certitude and belief in the world being subjected to this force, they would never have believed that matter has systems and orders, and so have the earth and the heavens (sky), what is near and what is far, even the stars and constellations that are deeply located in the cosmos.

Their insistence on discovering the systems stems from the belief in their existence. Both belief and submission do not take place except in the case of one who thinks that the world is subject to a great force, the one (force) with the knowledge and might. This "force" has created the systems; otherwise, belief in the eternity of the matter and in the wise systems being the product of chance does not mandate any surrender to the existence of the systems in all parts of the world, the near and the far.

In a more clear statement, every discoverer, prior to his discovery, has this particular belief: Every atom in this world, be it living or dead, near or far, contains a law which he wants to discover and to empty into the mold of science. It is then that we ask: Where did this discoverer get such submission and belief that this knowledge has a starting point and a source? What is this starting point?

He may say, "I believe that the whole world is the innovation of a great might that has tremendous knowledge and power and has created the world through its knowledge, ability and wisdom." If he does, he will be accurate in believing that each part of this world has a system because the deed of the one, who has the knowledge, might and wisdom is not separated from the systems where there is no imbalance or disorder.

But he may say, "I believe in the perpetuation of matter, and that solid matter came to have a system in the shade of chance during very ancient times." If so, he will be told that the belief in chance never accompanies surrendering to a system one hundred percent. It is always possible if either there is a system or there is none.

Interpreting 100% surrender to the existence of a system by believing in chance is quite wrong because it is similar to interpreting definite knowledge with something that does not cause sure knowledge but rather mandates only a probability. This is so because belief in chance initiates the probability that there is a system, not surrendering to its existence. Therefore, there has to be surrendering to a cause other

than chance, and this is nothing but believing in a feeling and in a power that has interfered to create the world and to bring it into existence.

If you wish, you can pour this statement into a logical mold and say: Every discoverer, before being busy discovering, surrenders to the existence of orders and systems in this world which he wants to discover. This is on the one hand.

On the other hand, the materialist sees the only factor for the appearance of systems is chance. But it is not a factor that brings about submission. Rather, the utmost that it produces is probability, whereas the discoverer bears knowledge with systems: He does not think of the probability that there is a system and an order.

Such submission must be interpreted as a second factor, which is nothing but the world coming to be and is perpetuated due to eternal knowledge and power.

B. Religion: Pillar of Ethics

You have come to know about religion's role in sparking the spirit of investigation in man. But it has another role in firming ethics and fixing their roots in the society. Here is how:

There is no doubt that upholding ethics and adhering to moral values is not separated from deprivation sometimes and from the abandonment of one's pleasures in other times. It is then that we have to look for the success factor on this battleground.

On the one hand, man is subjected to inclinations and aggressive instincts that do not know a limit, and they want to sin and to attain everything that is pleasurable and suitable, whether it agrees with or opposes ethical values. This is something that is sensed by everyone during many periods of his life.

On the other hand, the human nature inspires the safeguarding of values and the acting upon ethics. This is what educators advocate. It is then that one finds within himself a violent struggle against his inclinations. Therefore, in order for him to succeed in this battle, he needs a factor that tips the scales of the human nature, the nature that inspires the safeguarding of ethics and the acting upon values. So, what is this factor especially during the periods where no one is there to watch over him, when the eyes are asleep, and when one is not asked about what he is doing?

It is here that the religion manifests itself in the form of a strong factor that tips the scales of ethics down and inspires one to act according to values and to curb the reins of instincts. This is so because one who has a religion believes that everything he does in this life, be it good or bad, he will be held accountable for it by Allah Almighty with the strictest and most precise judgment:

"Nor is there (as much as) the weight of an atom on the earth or in the heavens that is hidden from the knowledge of your Lord" (Qur'an, 10:61).

The above case is the opposite of one who is an atheist and who does not believe in any divine book or in accountability, whether in the life of this world or in the hereafter. He does not see in the battle, where the instincts fight and dispute within his own being, any deterrent for violating the limits and ignoring the values other than an element the impact of which is weak. This is called the human nature, which will quickly be defeated by the flood of desires and fantasies. This is tangible, and we need not prolong our discussion of it.

C. Religion: Invincible Fortress in World's Fluctuations

Life on this planet is an ally of labor and exhaustion. One goes through times of happiness and of pain. He loses loved ones and faces trials and tribulations, in addition to other painful experiences of life that split one's back. So, what solace is there as one faces the bitterness of life?

I say that religion is the major solace that turns one into a firm mountain in the face of painful events, unshakeable during afflictions, immovable during calamities. Why is this so? It is due to two aspects.

First: He believes that what happens in the cosmos of good and evil is a manifestation of the will of the Wise Creator Who does not do anything except with wisdom, and Who does not act except upon an interest: These calamities are bitter outwardly and sweet inwardly, even if one does not sense it as such during the conditions of a tragedy and an affliction, but he will become familiar with it after the covering is removed and the facts become quite clear.

Second: If one perseveres as he faces calamities and welcomes them with an open heart and a shining face, he will be rewarded by the Praised One for his patience, firmness and straightforwardness and for his acceptance of His judgment and destiny:

"Convey glad tidings to those who patiently persevere, those who, when afflicted with calamity, say, 'To Allah do we belong, and to Him do we return.' They are the ones on whom God's blessings and mercy (descend), and they are the ones who receive guidance" (Qur'an, 2: 155-157).

It is then that religion manifests itself as a medicine that soothes the pains and alleviates the status of calamities, or perhaps these are even welcomed with a smile and are wholeheartedly accepted. But the materialist in the same situation has no balsam for his life's wounds, has no cure for his disturbances, because he does not believe that beyond the matter there is a world in which all people are gathered, a place where one is rewarded for his perseverance and be awarded prizes for his good deeds.

He believes that the cycle of the cosmos is limited by matter. It starts from it and ends at it. So, he has no choice except to return to it, the solid and blind that it is, one incapable of dressing man's wounds or cheering his spirits.

For this reason, we see how suicide is quite common among such a group of folks during calamities. As

for the group that believes in the life to come, in the hereafter, it thinks little of the pain of calamities when they take place. Its members find solace with patience. They anticipate rewards, contrarily to the materialists who think too much of them and who bend before them.

Had it been accurate for us to compare what is rational with what is tangible, emptying the lofty meanings in narrow molds of the senses, we must not be blamed if we say that religion, when one faces painful torrents that split the back and cause an explosion, is like a safety valve in steam furnaces. Their steam increases more and more.

So, had it not been for the safety valve that lets excess steam out, the furnace would explode in the factory and terribly kill and awfully burn people. Our excuse for bringing about an example such as this is that it falls in the category of comparing what is sensible with what is tangible.

4. Recognized Knowledge

The first step towards understanding religion is to be familiar with the recognized knowledge in it. Realistic religion does not regard every piece of knowledge as sound and reliable. Rather, it requires it to meet the following conditions:

a. The definite knowledge that never ceases to be emphatic, rejecting knowledge which comes through presumption, whim or doubt. The most Praised One says,

"...Do not follow that of which you have no knowledge, for (on the Day of Reckoning) inquiries will be made into every act of hearing or seeing or (feeling in) the heart" (Quran, 17:36).

You can see that this verse rejects all types of knowledge that are outside the frame of sure knowledge. For this reason, many verses condemn the following in the footsteps of fathers and forefathers without seeking a clear proof and without knowledge about it's being sound and effective. The Almighty says,

"Nay! They say, 'We found our fathers following a certain religion, and we follow in their footsteps'. Likewise, whenever We sent someone to warn before you to any nation, the wealthy ones among them said, 'We found our fathers following a certain religion, and we will certainly follow in their footsteps'" (Quran, 43:23).

The Quran transmits reports of many of those who advocate misguidance and who will on the Judgment Day bite their fingers out of regret saying,

"On the Day that their faces are turned upside down in the Fire, they will say, 'Woe unto us! Would that we had obeyed Allah and obeyed the Apostle!' And they would say, 'Lord! We obeyed our chiefs and our great men, and they misled us from the (right) path. Lord! Grant them double the penalty and curse them with a very great curse!'" (Qur'an, 33:66-68).

Knowledge, if it originates from tools of the senses, the heart or the mind, is considered as recognized. The most Praised One says,

"It is He Who brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers, when you knew nothing, and He made for you hearing and vision and hearts (so) that you may offer thanks (to Allah)" (Qur'an, 16:78).

Both hearing and vision symbolize tools of the senses. The hearts denote reason and sound intellectual realization. Any realization outside the frame of these tools is not to be relied on.

The reason for relying on these two tools, the senses and the mind, as being among the tools of knowledge is due to their being more accurate and to the result they produce being greater. Other tools on which people who are sick in the heart rely are not to be relied on. For these tools of knowledge there are divisions and branches that are all explained in the science of "theory of knowledge".

Yes, there is a question that forces itself here: If following in the footsteps of the fathers and forefathers as well as their traditions is contemptible, why has Islam permitted it in the field of knowing the practical branch rulings? Every Muslim is entitled to derive his sect in the branches and rulings from an imam and a scholar of jurisprudence. Is this not imitating these imams and scholars as the unbelievers used to do to their forefathers?

The answer to this question is clear. If one derives the rules from the skilled jurist who specializes in his field, he does not do so through contemptible imitation, that is, referring to someone else and imitating him without evidence. This is so because when a person who does not have certain knowledge refers to a man of knowledge and follows in his footsteps, he does so through evidence.

Such is the tradition of all men of wisdom in all fields. If one is ignorant about a craft, he refers to a craftsman who is familiar with it. If one is ignorant of medicine, he will refer to an experienced doctor, and so on. All this applies to branch matters.

As for principle matters, they are root matters, and the issue in their regard revolves round either absolute confirmation, as is the case with theologians, or absolute denial, as is the case with materialists. Following does not apply to them, for there is too little shared amount of knowledge to be relied on, and what is superfluous is rendered to the specialist. Each theologian or materialist claims to be a specialist in his science.

Because of what we have indicated, man has to delve deeply into principle issues without making an ideology as support and evidence.

5. Higher Branches of Knowledge in Islam

Islam urges familiarity with three matters from among various topics, considering them to be important

for a seeker of reality.

Knowledge of the Cosmos and of Nature

The Holy Quran enthusiastically emphasizes this knowledge that it should be attained; the Almighty says,

"Say: 'Behold all that is in the heavens and on earth'" (Qur'an, 10: 101).

He also says,

"Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day there are, indeed, Signs for men of understanding" (Qur'an, 3: 190).

A religious person has no option other than studying nature and delving into its depths according to his background and ability.

Man's Knowledge of His own Self

It is one of the necessities of knowledge which the Almighty stresses just as He stresses its precedent. He, the most Praised One, has said,

"We will soon show them Our Signs in the (furthest) regions (of the earth) and in their own souls, until it becomes manifest to them that this is the truth. Is it not enough that your Lord witnesses all things?" (Qur'an, 41:53).

Traditions have supported each other with regard to the importance of knowing the *nafs*, the self, and that through getting to know it and knowing all nature in which he lives, man gets to know his Lord.

Knowledge of History

The Quran emphasizes knowledge of history since such knowledge provides morals and admonishments. The most Praised One says,

"In their stories there is instruction for men endowed with understanding" (Qur'an, 12: 111)

and

"... so relate the tales [to them], perhaps they may reflect" (Qur'an, 7: 176).

These are the topics that Islam recommends to anyone who wishes to sense the facts and reach the reality in order to become familiar with it. One Who shuns these branches of knowledge is obstructed from knowing Him, the most Praised One, and from knowing His cosmic orders.

6. Why do we look for the existence of Allah, Praise to Him?

Before we focus on the causes of knowing Him, the most Praised One, and the evidences for His existence, we would like to answer a question that quite often is made by the youths, and it is derived from the plots of the materialists, especially the Marxists, in Islamic circles.

The outcome of the question is this: The research in what is beyond the matter (metaphysics) has no connection to life, and it is not one of the topics that fall within the frame of life which man lives during various phases of his lifetime, from his adolescence to youth to the age of maturity then to old age.

Looking into what is beyond the matter, there are higher existents stripped of matter and of its rules, such as the angels, the minds and the souls, etc. Above them all is the One Who created them and created all worlds, what is material and what is immaterial. This question is of no practical use in life even if it is proven with a thousand proofs. So, spending time on these researches hinders a youth from carrying out his necessary functions.

The answer to this question becomes obvious after reviewing what we have already stated. You have come to know that religion has a strong role and a great influence on the perfection of sciences. It also secures manners and is their best pillar, even a security for carrying out the proper laws. It is an invincible fortress on fluctuating occasions.

If it has such a great impact on our scientific, moral and social life, turning away from it and staying busy with something else is a great loss for humanity. What the materialist individual prattles about, that is, looking for religion and for metaphysics has nothing to do with life, is a lie told about the religion and a statement which lacks verification.

Yes, what we have stated about the role of religion and its impact on vital aspects of man is one of the concerns of the true religion that goes along with science and with ethics and does not oppose them. As regarding the various creeds that are attributed to inspiration and to the heavens with lies and falsehood, they are outside the fold of our research.

Avoiding Possible Harm

There is a spiritual factor that urges us to research these issues which are outside the frame of matter as well as material things. There is a large group of reformers, men of ethics, who have sacrificed themselves along the path to reform and cultivate the society, becoming the victims of the process of elevating it (morally and spiritually). They followed each other during the span of centuries and epochs. They invited the human communities to believe in Allah, Praise to Him, and in His attributes of perfection.

They claimed that He has imposed roles on His servants, that life does not stop at death, and that death is not its end or the last phase of it. It is, rather, a bridge on which man crosses from one abode to

another, from an incomplete life to a complete one. Anyone who performs his roles and obligations will receive the most generous rewards. As for those who oppose and who are haughty, they will receive the greatest retribution.

This has been heard by people in this life from men of inspiration and reform. These were not accused of being liars or fabricators. Rather, the marks of truthfulness were visible throughout their lives, actions and statements. At this juncture, the thinking human mind prompts one to look into the truth of these men's statements in order to avoid any probable or perceived harm to which their statements refer.

The statements of these men are no less than telling an ordinary person about the swift harm or the defrayed one in the temporal life. So, you find the rational individual demonstrating interest when he is told so, examining its existence so he may avoid the harm about which he is warned.

This has been relied on by scholars of logic in proving the need to look for the knowledge about Allah, Praise to Him, necessitating this research in order to avoid probable or perceived harm.

Knowing Allah and Thanking the Originator of Blessings

Undoubtedly, man is drowned in his life in blessings. These blessings surround him since his early childhood up to the end of his life. Nobody can deny it.

On the other hand, reason sees it as too little to just thank the One Who grants the blessings. Such thanking is not true except after knowing Him.

Both these matters necessitate looking for the Grantor of blessings who has overwhelmed man with blessings, flooding him with them. Getting to know Him through research is a response to the call of reason and to its admonishment to thank this Grantor. Such thanking branches out of knowing Him.

These are the three aspects (religion's role in life, avoiding a probable harm and the necessity to thank the Grantor of blessings after knowing Him) to which we referred as a whole and which stimulate man to research the knowledge about Allah, and to be interested in it more than in anything that intrudes on his material life.

Those who shun these issues do so for spiritual reasons with which the researcher is familiar, for there is no doubt that knowing Allah and believing in Him are matters that are not separated from commitment to restrictions and limits in life, as well as adherence to the ethical and social rules, and to carrying out individual functions.

All this does not oppose the absolute freedom and licentiousness sought by the materialists and those who follow their tracks. Denying religions and principles is not self-denial. Rather, it is a flight from the securities, commitments, restrictions and limits. The latter oppose man's licentious inclination that sees nothing in life essentially other than pleasure.

Here we come to the conclusion of the precepts which we wanted to bring about in order to explain the concept of religion and its roots in the human nature, its role in man's life and the need to know Allah, the most Blessed, the most Exalted One. Statements chase them about proofs for the existence of the Creator who created this existence.

1. Actually, Will Durant was born on November 5, 1885 and died on November 7, 1981. He was contemporary of the compiler. – Tr.

2. Will Durant, Pleasures of Philosophy, p. 478.

Chapter 2: Ways To Knowing Allah

Ways To Know Allah

There is a precious statement by people of knowledge. “The ways to knowing Allah are as many as the population of creations and even many, many times more.” This is so because every natural phenomenon has two faces like those of a coin: One of them talks about its existence, limits, details and position in the cosmos, while the other talks about its link with its causation, its existence through it, its origination from it.

This natural phenomenon, from the standpoint of the first face, is the subject of research in natural sciences. Each researcher takes one aspect of this face according to his specialization, taste and knowledge. One looks into dust and minerals, another looks into plants and trees, while a third looks into animal life, and so on.

From the standpoint of the other face, it is located as a path towards knowing Allah, praise to Him, and to getting to know Him from the aspect of His Signs:

Our signs lead to us,
So look after us at the signs.

The natural phenomena, the great, the magnanimous as well as the petty, have two faces. Islam has stressed getting to know them and to delve deeply into their signs and details:

“Say: ‘Behold all that is in the heavens and on earth’” (Qur’an, 10:101).

But it does not mean that one should stop at just such knowledge and regard as his (ultimate) goal. Rather, it means he must use such knowledge as a bridge to know the One Who created and initiated

everything, the One Who created in them the ways and the systems.

The difference is clear between a materialist who gets to know nature and the theologian. The first looks at nature as it is, standing at it without using it as means to know the other, i.e. he (only) gets to know the principles of their existence and the causes behind their formation. Although he looks at the natural phenomena just as the materialist looks at them and tries to become acquainted with all the laws and systems that dominate them, the theologian, on the other hand, uses them as means to a higher knowledge: knowing the Doer Who made them exist, the One Who set up systems in them. It is as though the first look is cast at the appearance of an existent, whereas the second transcends it to the interior.

To put it more clearly, the materialist limits himself, in the knowledge world, to knowing a thing while remaining heedless about any other knowledge, the knowledge of the beginning of that thing by knowing its signs and indications. If we limit ourselves, in (our attempt to) knowing the phenomena, to the first knowledge, we will confine ourselves in the dungeons of the matter.

But if we look at the cosmos in a broad outlook and take with that knowledge another norm of knowledge, that is, the knowledge of the indications, we will have in the light of so doing reached a broader world filled with might, knowledge, perfection and goodness.

Thereupon, all natural phenomena, besides their goodness and magnificence, ways and systems, point towards the One Who initiated them, formed them and made them what they are. It is then that the truth will be manifested to the reader in what we said about the ways to knowing Allah counting as many as the natural phenomena, starting from the atom and ending with the constellation. Towards this end, we see the men of inspiration and advocates of *Tawhid* focusing on knowing Him, the most Praised One.

They focus on the call to look into the goodness and magnificence of nature, for it provides the truest testimony that it has a Creator and Initiator, and this is obvious for one who studies the Quran and contemplates on its miracles. Through referring man to nature, to the heavens and to the earth, to the beings and existents they contain, the Quran wants to guide him towards the One Who started them all. The following verse suffices to testify to this fact:

“Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, in the alternation of night and day; in the sailing of ships through the ocean for the benefit of mankind, in the rain which Allah sends down from the skies, and in the life which He gives through it to an earth that is dead, in the beasts of all kinds that He scatters throughout the earth, in the change of the winds, and in the clouds which they trail like their slaves between the heavens and the earth... (there) indeed are signs for people of wisdom” (Qur’an, 2: 164).

Evidences leading to the existence of a Creator of this cosmos, the One Who poured life onto it, are numerous and diversified, and we will now be stating only some of them. In order to be familiar with the most clear of them, the closest to senses and to experience, we focus this research on the system that

responds to all minds regardless of the differences in their levels of thinking.

First Proof: Order Proof

The order proof is based on four premises:

First: There is, beyond the human intellect, a world filled with existents and surrounded by natural phenomena. What man imagines in this intellect is a reflection of the outer reality. Both, theologian and materialist endorse this premise. They reject any idea based on denying reality and resorting to idealism, that is, denying the outer facts.

Every realistic person believes that there is a moon, a sun, a sea, an ocean, etc. He believes in its existence, having a mind on which its picture is reflected, and this is the first step in the scope of knowing Allah: believing in realities. Realists, rather than idealists who follow their imagination, share it.

Thus, hurling the charge of idealism on a theologian appears to be indicative of denying realities, a fabrication, a lie, for there is none on earth that can be a theologian while, at the same time, denying the realities of things and the natural phenomena. Had there been someone who adheres to such a creed, he would have been one who deviates from the sound human nature.

What may be said about some men of knowledge indicating that the real existent is Allah, Praise to Him, and that anything else exists metaphorically, has an interesting meaning which does not harm what we have stated. It is similar to a lamp in the sunray. It is said: Light is the sun's, and there is no other light besides it. Such is the presence of anything that can exist, and things that stand on their own, compared to the One Who creates existence, who stands all alone, all by Himself.

Second: A naturalist submits to a defined system, and that everything in the cosmos is never separated from the systems and ways that have distinguished natural sciences from each other. The more these sciences progress, the more strides man takes towards getting to know the cosmos and the laws that prevail in it.

Third: The origin of cause. It means that everything in the cosmos, the systems and the laws, is not separated from a cause that originates it, and the thing coming to be *without* One Who originates it, who causes it to be, is an impossibility which reason does not admit, nor is it admitted by nature, conscience and evidence. Thereupon, the entire cosmos, all systems and causes (in it), is a result of a cause that brought it to be, that made it what it is.

Fourth: Evidence of the sign is manifested in two ways:

A. The existence of an effect proves the existence of whatever/whoever affects it such as the causation indicating the cause, the sign indicating the one that makes it. A Bedouin is reported as having said, "The dung leads to the camel, the footprints lead to the path," in addition to other statements

necessitated by nature. Both, materialist and theologian agree upon this conclusion. What is really important is the second way:

B. The evidence of a sign is not confined to leading to the presence of the affecter; rather, it has another evidence as well as the first. It is the revelation of the details of the affecter, his mind, knowledge and feeling, or stripping him of all these perfections, attributes and others. Let us explain this with an example. The Canon book, which is written on medicine, just as it has the first sign, the existence of an affecter, has also the second one that is the revelation of its details. The latter include: The author is an expert on medicine and its laws; he is acquainted with the ailments and their cures; he is knowledgeable with medicinal herb, up to the end of such details.

The great epic, *Shahnameh*, the Persian Book of Kings, is the longest poem written by Iran's poet, Ferdowsi. It has two indications: This epic did not come to be except in the light of a cause that brought it into being. It is also an indication that the author was a fiery poet well informed with tales and chronicles, expert in the use of the suitable meanings with epics.

Another example is whatever ruins of inherited civilizations you pass by, such as buildings of antiquity, precious books, quaint handicrafts, small and large factories, up to the end of the list of what one can see. What is important in this regard is not to be confined to the first indication but to focus on the second in a precise scientific way.

In the light of this basis, reason contemplates on the details that surround the cause, prying their status, judging clearly that the actions characterized by systems and precise calculations have to be the outcome of an affecter who is wise, one who can through his precision make his sign and action.

It also rules that the actions in which neither precision nor sound system is done result from a doer who is not rational, a doer without a sense, without a reason; such is the conclusion reached by a sound mind through its accumulated knowledge. In order to explain this status, we bring about the following examples:

First Example: Let us suppose that there is a warehouse filled with tons of building materials, including blocks, iron, cement, mortar, wood, glass, wires, pipes and other such materials needed for building. One half of the contents of this store are put under the management of an engineer or an architect in order to build a multi-level building on a flat plot of land.

After a period of time, a violent flood sweeps whatever construction materials remained in the warehouse, leaving them in the form of a hill on the ground.

The first action, the building, resulted from the will and work of a knowledgeable engineer.

As for the second, the "hill", it took place as a natural outcome of a flood without a will or a feeling.

Men of wisdom, in their different levels, nationalities and times, rule for the rationality of the one who built

the building, the extent of might of innovation in building, how he placed the columns in their suitable places, covered the walls with marble, erected the doors in their special places, stretched the wires and hot and cold water pipes, connecting them with baths and sinks, in addition to whatever follows a special and precise engineering.

But when we come out to the sierra to see what the torrent had done, the ultimate view of what we will see is the absence of a system and an order. The rocks and marbles have been buried under the mud and dust, the iron bars thrown aside, the wires torn between mortar pieces, the doors hurled here and there, up to the end of manifestations of chaos and scattering. Generally, what is missing in this mess is order and calculation: There is neither engineering nor administration.

What is deducted is that the one who erected the building has reason and wisdom, whereas whatever caused the hill pile does not have them. The engineer has a will power, the flood lacks it. The first resulted from rationality and knowledge, whereas the second is the outcome of water gushing forth, moving blindly.

Second Example: Let us suppose we entered a room and found in it two persons, each is sitting before a typewriter to type a poem composed by a poet. The first person reads and writes very well. He knows the positions of letters on the machine. The other is illiterate. The best that he can do is to press buttons. They start simultaneously. What we notice is that the first is precise in what he does, typing the letters according to those in the poem without dropping a letter or a word of it.

As for the other, the illiterate one, the blind one, he hits on the machine without knowledge or guidance, being unable to distinguish one letter from another. The outcome of what he does is nothing but a waste of time and of sheets of paper, and he does not produce what we ask him.

The production of the first is the harvest of an educated writer, whereas that of the second is the harvest of an ignorant person who has neither knowledge nor experience. If thousands who have lost their eyesight and who have been deprived of knowledge and learning are given the chance to type a single correct copy of millions which we type, it will be impossible, because they lack the basis, the foundation.

We may see, in each portion of this cosmos, something similar to the page on which the poet's poem was typed. And we may feel obligated to admit the science, the knowledge and the good style of the person who wrote it. We will emphatically conclude that he enjoys a sound eyesight and does not lack knowledge: His action is not similar to that of a boy who found himself in an empty room, so it came into his mind to sport and play on a typewriter in order to produce that page of the poem.

Having stated these examples, the difference becomes clear for us between the actions that are done through will and management and those that take place haphazardly. There is neither will nor management in the latter.

This principle, which the mind realizes (not due to experiment but in the light of thinking and

rationalizing), is the spirit of the order proof which is one of the most clear proofs provided by the theologians in proving the existence of the Doer and in rejecting atheism and materialism and the most comprehensive for all classes of people. The summary of their logic in implementing this premise on the world (cosmos) is that science keeps progressing and unveiling the symbols and systems in existence in the world of the matter, of nature, and that all sciences, in their different divisions, types, branches and sub-branches, aim at one matter.

The world, in which we live, from the atom to the constellation, is a harmonious world where the most precise order and restriction prevails. So, what is the reason behind all of that? I say that it points to one of two and nothing else:

First: There is an existent that exists outside the framework of matter; One Who is knowledgeable, able, originator of perfection and goodness. He has created the matter and formed it through the most precise of orders, organizing them through precise laws and restrictions. He, due to His broad knowledge and infinite might, created the world and let the laws work their way in it, vesting on it the systems which science, since it came to be and till now, has been trying very hard to discover, remaining busy recording them. This good affecter who has knowledge and might is Allah, Praise to Him.

Second: Ancient solid and blind matter, which still exists and is not preceded by void, started the precise laws on its own, vesting on its own self the sound systems in the shade of endless emotions that took place inside it, ending across centuries and generations with this great system which has dazzled the minds and mesmerized the eyes.

If we present both these theories to the fourth premise for the order proof, which is capable of distinguishing between what is sound and what is not, there is no doubt that it will support the first and invalidate the second due to what you have come to know, that is, the details that are inherent in the existence of the cause and sign, spell out the details that prevail on the affecter and the cause.

The systems and laws reveal accounting and precision. They are conjoint with knowledge and the sense of cause. So, how can the solid and blind matter, which has no sense, be the one that created these systems and laws?

In the light of all of this, the systems and laws, very little of which has science been successful so far to discover, prove the first theory which is: embracing the cause and inclusion of the sense and the science and everything that suits them. It voids the second theory which is: a solid and blind matter vesting systems on its own self without accounting and precision by imagining that many emotions, which (supposedly) take place in the essence of the matter, ended up at this dazzling system under the label "chance" or other internal struggles articulated by Marxists.

Thereupon, every cosmic science that looks for the matter and its details, revealing its systems and laws, is like a coin with two faces. From one face, matter is known through its own details, whereas from the other face, its initiator and maker is known. The naturalist looks at one of the faces, whereas the

Gnostic looks at the other.

The theologian looks at both sides, seeing the first to be the cause of the second. Thus, we conclude that natural sciences, all of them, are within the scope of providing the fourth premise for the order proof, that the perfection of sciences assists that proof with the most clear and precise of methods, and that the belief in the able Maker of the world accompanies knowledge in all ages and times.

In conclusion, we would like to focus on two points:

First: The Holy Quran is full of the words “*aya*” (guiding sign or miracle) and “*aayaat*” (pl.). For example, when it details nature’s systems and laws and presents the wonders and obscurities of the world, it follows it by saying: “In this, there is an *aya* for people who ponder” or “who contemplate” or “who rationalize”, up to the end of such phrases which urge contemplation, meditation, and the like.

These “signs” present the order proof in the most clear form spoken by nature, proven by these “signs”, prompting one to feel that pondering on these electro–dynamic systems and puzzling laws reveals clearly that there is One Who makes them exist, One Who is knowledgeable, able, seeing, and it is impossible for solid blind matter to do so. So that the kind reader may acquaint himself with some of these *aayaat*, signs or miracles, we would like to point out to some Quranic verses in the Chapter of the Bees (*al-Nahl*, Ch. 16 of the Holy Quran):

“With it He produces corn, olives, date-palms, grapes, and every kind of fruit for you: Truly (there) is a Sign (aya) in this [production process] for those who ponder” (16:11).

“And the things on this earth which He has multiplied in varying colors (and qualities): Truly (there) is a Sign (aya) in this for men who celebrate the praises of Allah (in gratitude)” (16:13).

“And Allah sends down rain from the skies, and with it [He] gives life to the land after its death: Truly (there) is a Sign (aya) in [doing] this for those who listen” (16:65).

“And from the fruit of the date-palm and the vine you get wholesome food and drink: Behold! There is also a Sign (aya) in this for those who are wise” (16:67).

“Then eat of all the produce (of the earth), and find the spacious paths of your Lord with skill: From within their bodies, a drink of varying colors issues in which (there) is healing for men: Truly (there) is a Sign in this for those who ponder” (16:69).

Second: The order proof depends on four premises the first three of which are agreed upon by all men of reason with the exception of misfit idealists who deny the outer realities. What is important is to focus on explaining this fourth premise with help from natural and cosmic as well as other sciences that are regarded as the essence and the foundation of that premise.

In this regard, we find glorious statements made by science experts from among the inventors and

discoverers. Claude M. Josie, designer of the electronic mind, says, “Few years ago, I was asked to design an electric calculator that can resolve hypotheses and complex bi-dimensional equations. The product of my work and effort is this electronic mind.

“I spent the next years completing on this work, tolerating various troubles as I sought to make a small piece of equipment. It is difficult for me to accept this notion. This piece of equipment can be invented by its own self, without the need for a designer.”

“Our world is full of self-dependent equipment as well as others which, at the same time, hinge on still others, and each of them is regarded as much more complex than the electronic mind which I made. If this electronic mind requires a designer, what can we then say, with regard to our bodies and their biological, physical and chemical interactions? There has to be a wise designer, a Creator of this cosmos of which I am an insignificant part.”¹

What is amazing about the supposition on which the materialists, one generation after another, depend is that they say that the endless inadvertent emotions accidentally ended up at this magnificent system.

Prof. Edwin G. Conklin (1863 – 1952) (American biologist and zoologist) says the following about this theory: “This supposition is not different from our saying, ‘A huge language dictionary was produced by the press following an explosion inside it’.”

The precise cosmic system makes scientists predict the movement of meteors and comets and express natural phenomena through mathematical equations.

The presence of this system in the cosmos, rather than the chaos, is clear evidence that these events take place according to certain principles and bases, and that there is a wise might that controls it. Nobody who has a share of reason can believe that this solid matter which lacks sense and feeling—and through blind chance—granted itself this system and has kept sustaining it.

There are hundreds of words about building the order proof and presenting it in a literary and scientific spirit suitable for the century, and we are satisfied with presenting this much of them.

Order Proof in a Second Report

Harmony: Sign of Feeling’s Involvement in the Existence of the Cosmos

The previous report for proving the system depended on observing each material phenomenon independently and separately from all others. The system that prevails on the cell independently from all other phenomena was the subject matter.

Similar to it are all material phenomena having magnificent systems, such as the movement of the sun and the moon and others, but this proof can be reported in another way which depends on the harmony overwhelming the world and the fantastic links among its parts. From harmony and linkage do we

conclude that this connected and harmonious system is the creation of a great mind and broad knowledge. Without the existence of this mind, this amazing, connected and harmonious system could not have been possible.

Scientific researchers have revealed the strong linkage among all parts of the world and the effect of the whole over the whole; so much so that even the flutter of the tree leaves is not separate from the storming wind in the furthest part of the earth. Even the distant stars, the distances of which are measured by light years, bear an effect over the life of plants, animals and mankind.

This strong harmony, which has made the world look like a huge factory each part of which is tied to the other, is the best evidence of the involvement of a great mind in its mutability and perfection, so much so that the whole is harmonious with the whole.

In a clearer statement, order and balance in the cosmos, which both prevail over nature, are the clearest evidence of the interference of a great mind over their coming into existence. In order to see the features of getting this idea closer to our understanding, we would like to state the following examples:

1. Each plant's life depends on a small amount of carbon dioxide (CO₂). Through plant leaves, it separates the carbon from the oxygen, then the plant keeps the carbon in order to make from it and from other materials fruits, produce and flowers, ejecting the oxygen which we inhale in the inhalation and exhalation process, an essential process for man's life. If the animals do not carry out their task in kicking out CO₂, or if the plants do not exhale oxygen, balance in nature would turn upside down and animal life, or plant life would consume all oxygen or all CO₂; plants would fizzle and man would die. So, who established this relationship between plants and animals, creating this exchange system between these two different worlds? Does this not prove that there is a doer who is managing and (whose management) is effective, one who stands behind natural phenomena and sets up this balance?

2. Several years ago, a species of cactus was planted in Australia as a protective fence, but this species continued its path and covered a wide area, turning into a menace to the urban and rural residents, destroying their farms. The residents found no way to stop it from spreading, and Australia was under the risk of being invaded by an army of a silent plant that keeps advancing without a barrier! Entomologists toured planet earth till they found one insect that lives only on this cactus, feeding only on it, and it spreads quickly and has no enemy to block its path in Australia. This insect soon vanquished the cactus then retreated, keeping only a little of it for protection sufficiently to block the cactus from spreading indefinitely.² So, how did that insect know that it had to eliminate the excess cactus and not to bother the rest in order to keep the cactus trees balanced so they may not overwhelm other things? Does this balance and order not reveal the existence of a wise managing creator?

3. In past ages, ship navigators used to fall sick of scurvy, a disease caused by malnutrition and a shortage of vitamin "C", but a traveller discovered a simple medicine for it: lemon juice. Where did this relationship between fruits having vitamin "C" and this ailment come from? Does this not prove that the

one that created the ailment also created the medicine that suits it? Had it not been for this balance, catastrophe would have prevailed, the human species would have become extinct and mankind would have been wiped off the face of earth.

4. When the early immigrants migrated to Australia and settled in it, they imported twelve pairs of rabbits, which they released there. Those rabbits had no natural enemies in Australia, so they multiplied at a stunning pace, causing serious damages to grasses and herbs, and numerous attempts failed to minimize the breeding of those rabbits till a special virus was discovered which causes a lethal disease in them. Thus, the pastures regained their greenness and the production of cattle rose as a result. Is this precisely not the programmed balance in natural phenomena that lead to no imbalance with serious harms? Is this not categorical evidence of the presence of a creator who is knowledgeable and a God who administers nature?

5. Water is the only thing the velocity of which decreases at freezing. This attribute has its significant importance for life. Because of it, ice floats over water surface when it is very cold instead of sinking to the bottom of oceans. Lakes and rivers gradually form solid blocks. Otherwise, there is no way to get them out so they may melt. The ice that floats over the surface of the sea forms an insulation layer that protects the water underneath it at an above freezing temperature. Thus, species of fish, other water animals and plants remain alive. When spring comes, ice will melt quickly and easily.

So, can all this order, precision in measures and ratios be attributed to the solid, blind and dumb matter, whereas the reality reveals management and calculation and talks about a perfect and great system. This system indicates that behind all of this is a wise creator who created this amazing balance and precise order.

Yes, indeed, both this balance and order testify to the interference of feeling, wisdom and reason in administering this world, managing it and keeping it going, matters which cannot be present by mere chance. Rather, they are available through a supreme might that has feeling and a goal and realizes the interest of the cosmos and the needs of life with full and comprehensive comprehension, so it subjects the cosmos to such restrictions and interrelations.

Order Proof in a Third Report

Objectiveness: Sign Incorporates Feeling in System Development

An in-depth look into the cosmos guides us to a special system that we call “service system”. We see special systems in the cosmos employed in serving other cosmic systems so one does not exist without the other. Therefore, we see a strong connection between the various manifestations. It is then that the following question forces itself: How did this tangible way in the cosmic world come to be?

Did it come to exist by chance, while it is less than creating systems some of which serve the others? Is it incapable of creating a thing in this precise way? If so, what about the large group?

Or is it due to the “particularity of the matter” to which some materialists may resort? It, too, is more incapable of providing an explanation. The “particularity hypothesis” aims at each cell, or each atom, has a particular effect that ends up at a special existent having order. As for great systems serving similar systems, it cannot explain the “particularity hypothesis”.

Such is the effect of the total, not that of each part of the matter. Let us bring an example. Undoubtedly the composition of woman and the systems created in her have all material causes that demonstrate it on the page of existence. She has two breasts, and the details related to her and the milk, which is formed in her breast, have material causes that end at such manifestations.

The way a baby is formed inside the womb and its birth in a way that suits the details relevant to it and to its own formation with a special mouth and special nutritional vessels that depend only on milk. All these have material causes that cannot be denied.

There is a third thing. Woman, in her material systems, serves the second phenomenon in all its systems, so much so that had there been no first, there would have been no way for the second to live and to endure. It is then that we ask about this particularity which we labeled a serving system: Is it the product of a cause? Did chance make the first a means for the second while it is incapable of creating it in this huge quantity? Had it been accurate to use it for an explanation, it would have been accurate about one or two births and not in these endless and innumerable births except with the use of astronomical figures.

Or is it from the aspect of the particularity of the matter, which is futile because the particularity hypothesis, if its accuracy is taken for granted, aims at explaining the partial system through the particularity of the matter. As for explaining the quantity in systems some of which serve the others through the particularity of the matter, it does not prove such hypothesis, nor do its advocates claim that it does. Harmony and inter-servicing cannot be the effect of a single cell or something like that.

Reason, in this situation, dictates that this system, this particularity, is the product of an innovating creator capable of coordinating these systems in a scientific presentation and a special map that renders the first phenomenon a pretext for the second. He created the first one before innovating the second within a time interval, and this is what we call objectiveness.

A creation is not separate from a goal. Advocating it is not separate from the supervision of a creator who is innovative, knowledgeable and capable of controlling the cosmos; he is the one whom theologians adopt call “God of the world.”

In a clear statement, we see that the hand of might and innovation had, years before the birth of the baby, prepared many systems on which the baby’s existence and march in life depend. They in advance prepared what the life of the baby needs in its first years in a magnificent way, and this is the clearest evidence that the cosmos is not without an objective, a goal, and that the one that created it aimed at an objective, a (certain) goal. And it is never without the interference of a feeling. It rejects chance

explaining and analyzing the cosmos.

We wonder how many prominent similarities there are, how many magnificent examples for this sort of objectiveness in the page of the cosmos about which we are yet to say a word.

Order Proof in a Fourth Report

Proof According to Probabilities of the Origin of Life

Determining the order proof can be done in a fourth way, and it is not an independent proof but a difference in reporting it. The essence of the proof is the same, while the reporting methods are different. We shall call this report “proof according to the probabilities of the origin of life”.

Life Pawned to Terms and Conditions

Life on earth is the result of the combination of many conditions each of which is like a portion of the cause of the existence of the living phenomenon. The living phenomenon is impossible in the absence of any of these conditions, let alone many or all of them. Some of these conditions are connected to the cosmos, some are connected to the air and gases that surround us, and some are connected to life and the vegetation, animal life and the inanimate objects it contains. The sciences of physics have undertaken the task of explaining these conditions, so we do not have to state them here.

Rather, we would like to say that these conditions are so many, the possibility of their combination in the order and synchronization that leads to the stability of the living phenomenon by way of chance is a possibility that stands in contrast to countless other possibilities, so much so that it becomes so small, it is rendered unreliable. For example, for life to exist, there are elements and causes to the least of which we would like to refer here.

1. The earth, on which we live, is surrounded by a thick blanket of gases called the atmospheric cover the thickness of which is eight hundred kilometers, and it is like a protective umbrella which safeguards the globe from being exposed to the danger of comets. These comets split every day from planets, they scatter in the space and have been doing so for about twenty million years. Without this cover, millions of burning comets would have fallen on every spot of the earth.

2. The earth is distant from the sun by 93 million miles. Therefore, the heat that reaches it from the sun is in a measure which is suitable for life and is proportionate with its requirements. Had the distance between the sun and the earth been more than it presently is by, say, twice the distance, the amount of heat that it receives from the sun would have decreased. And had this distance been reduced to the half, the heat received by the earth would have doubled. In both cases, life becomes impossible.

3. The air we inhale is a mixture of many gases, including 78% nitrogen, 21% oxygen, etc. Had this amount been changed and the percentage of oxygen in the air is made 50%, all flammable materials

would have turned into burnt items, and the matter would have reached the extent that if a spark hits a forest, it will burn everything in it without leaving one dry branch. Had the percentage of oxygen in the air been reduced to 10%, we would have lost most elements on which our civilization now stands.

These are examples of the numerous conditions on which the probability of life on this planet stands. They are so many, they are almost innumerable, countless. On this basis, we return to the essence of the topic and say: Life appearing on the face of this earth requires necessary elements that have to be present. If one of their endless elements is missing, life will come to an end, and it will be impossible for living beings to continue to exist.

Thereupon, the speculation that these necessary and harmonious conditions can become available through the random explosion of the blind matter is a very minute possibility that cannot be relied on. This is so because at the time of the explosion of the first matter, it could have appeared in numerous different ways without which life cannot settle except in a special way or in one status. It is then that one will wonder: How did the first matter explode without the interference of a broad sense and reason to this special form that enables life to stabilize?

Let us take from all living phenomena a small insect in the millions of different elements that it contains and which are put together in their own particular percentages. The first matter can appear in various forms that are not suitable for the life of the insect but what is suitable for it is only one of them. It is then that we raise this question: How could the first matter, by way of chance, surrender to one single form from among so many which is suitable for its life?

This proof is the one known in the mathematical sciences as the calculation of probabilities. In order to explain it, we provide this example.

Let us suppose a blind person sits before a typewriter and tries to press its buttons, a hundred in number, including capital and small letters, trying to type a poem by a well-known poet such as Labeed in which he says,

*Everything other than Allah is false,
Every bliss imminently disappears.*

It is possible the first press accidentally hits the first letter of this poem, the second press hits the second letter of it, the third press accidentally hits the third letter, and so on. This probability is one that faces many others that cannot be explained through read mathematical figures. If you wish to get that figure, you have to multiply the number of the letters of the typewriter by themselves according to the count of the number of letters in the poem to be typed. If the letters of the typewriter are a hundred, and the total number of letters of one verse of the poem is 38, the number of probabilities will be one in front of which are 76 zeros.

If we add to the first verse another, the probabilities of typing both verses accidentally by our blind friend

will reach a number close to zero.

It is impossible for a thinker to accept this minute probability—which is suitable for achieving the end—from among all those huge probabilities and possibilities. Anyone who sees the two verses properly typed will undoubtedly conclude that the one who typed them must be a person of knowledge and wisdom, and they did not take place by a blind chance.

This is said about a poem, so, what about the cosmos and life which both result from the combination of millions of millions of conditions and elements in certain percentages and at a very high degree of craftsmanship and precision? So, can a wise person say that these living conditions came to be when the first matter exploded and took place through one of these numerous probabilities, regarding reliance on this probability, that is, reliance on the zero, as being mathematic?

In this regard, Chris Morrison says, “The size of planet earth, its distance from the sun, the temperature in the sun, its life giving rays, the thickness of the earth’s atmosphere, the quantity of water, the amount of oxygen dioxide, the size of nitrogen, life appearing and staying alive, all these matters prove that system departs from chaos (i.e., it is a system, not chaos), and testify to a design and a purpose. They also prove that, according to strict mathematical laws, all this could not have happened coincidentally at the same time on one planet once in a billion. It could have taken place thus, but certainly this did not take place.”³

Reporting this proof and mathematical way proves that the order proof agrees with all ages and suits all mentalities and levels, and reporting it is not limited to one way. Thus, the secret behind the Quran focusing on that evidence becomes clear. The following verses refer to it. The most Praised One has said,

“Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of night and day; in the sailing of ships through the ocean for the benefit of mankind; in the rain which Allah sends down from the skies, and the life which He gives with it to an earth that is dead; in the beasts of all kinds that He scatters throughout the earth; in the change of the winds and clouds which they trail like slaves between the sky and the earth... (there) are indeed signs for wise people” (Qur’an, 2: 164).

Confusion about the Order Proof

British philosopher David Hume⁴ objected to the order proof in a way the sum of which is as follows: “The basis of the order proof—as was misconceived by Hume and Western philosophers—stands on our having witnessed that all organized human-made materials are not without a skilled maker. The house is not made without a builder, the ship is not built without workers, and so the organized cosmos has to also have a maker due to its likeness to these human-made things.”

Then he criticized this conclusion by saying it is based on the similarity between the natural beings and

what humans (themselves) make. But this similarity by itself is not sufficient because of the judgment of each overlapping on that of the other due to their differences. What humans make are artificial, whereas the cosmos is a natural existence. So, they are two things having no similarity between them. Therefore, how can we find out that one of them rules over the other?

It is true, we have tried what humans have made, and we have found them to be unable to come to existence without a rational person making them, creating them, and shaping them. But we did not try to do so in the cosmos. The existence of the cosmos has not recurred so man may become familiar with how it was created and came to be. Rather, he faced it for the first time. Thus, no reason can be found which points out to its Creator if we follow the same way when we look into what humans make unless this has been tried scores of times.

The process of creation and genesis is witnessed as one can see and experience when it comes to man-made things, so he may become familiar with the fact that the cosmos, in the system it contains, cannot come to exist without a knowledgeable Creator, an all-knowing Maker. This is the sum of the confusion that we have clearly explained.

The confused stated actually spells out a very naive and superficial understanding of the proof behind the systems. It expresses the West's lack of a comprehensive philosophical school that realizes and absorbs the system's proof in its right form. This proof is not at all connected to making a similitude, to imitating, to experimenting; rather, it is a completely rational proof. Reason determines it after a natural observation of the system, of what it is, that it is made by a rational Doer, an Omni-Potent Creator.

In order to explain what we have stated, the system's proof is not based on the similarity between what humans make and what naturally exists as Hume has objected, so a judgment can be made about both types and one is described as artificial while another is natural, and the judgment about the first cannot be applied to the other.

Nor can it be made by comparison which determines an experiment, so it may be said that we tried it in man-made things but did not try it in the cosmos due to its taking place has not recurred, and we did not see its coming into existence several times. The judgment, therefore, passed about the first cannot be withdrawn and applied to the other.

Instead, it is based on a rational observation of the systems, harmony and order among the particles of existence. Something is judged as is without the interference of an experiment or a comparison, that is, the One Who created the system definitely exists, having a mind and a feeling, and here is the explanation.

The order proof is comprised of two precepts: One is related to the senses, whereas the other is related to reason. The role of the senses is restricted to prove a subject, that is, the existence of a system in the cosmos and the rules prevailing over it. As for the role of reason, it is rendered to this order; in its pre-determined method and quantity cannot be the product of chance or of any factor that lacks feeling.

As regarding the minor one, it does not need an explanation. All natural sciences guarantee to explain the magnificent systems prevailing over the world from atoms to constellations. What is important is to explain the major one, that is, that reason dictates that it (cosmos) is the product of a great reason so it would take place without seeking help in judging it from similarity or experience; rather, it is purely independent of all of that. Let us say the following:

Logical Connection between System and Sense

Reason dictates that there should be a logical connection between the system and the interference of the sense because this system, in reality, has nothing but three matters.

1. Inter-connections among various different parts with regard to how much and how
2. Arranging them and organizing them in a way where cooperation and interaction among them is possible
3. Objectivity towards a goal sought and anticipated from this organizing apparatus

System in this sense exists in all parts of the cosmos, from the atom to the constellation. If reason looks into all aspects of the cosmos, starting from the atom and passing by man, animals and plants and ending with the stars, planets and constellations, one will see in them parts that are different in, first, how much and how and, second, in the way they are particularly organized and coordinated.

He will see, third, how this anticipated goal is achieved. He will immediately rule that this cannot happen except by a rational doer, a Creator with a goal and feeling Who creates the various parts in their particular quantity and methodology, arranging and organizing them so they can interact with each other and cooperate to achieve the goal anticipated behind their existence.

This judgment, which is issued by reason, is not based on anything other than looking at the system and its stubborn nature in order to verify whether a rational managing doer is involved, and it is not based on similarity or experiment as Hume and his likes have imagined.

When reason observes the order through the eye, ear, brain, heart or cell, that is to say, the existence of parts that differ in their quantity and are first of all, arranged, and, secondly, are symmetrical, so they can interact with each other and, thirdly, so they may achieve the goal behind them. All this prompts reason to judge that they are the doing of a knowledgeable creator due to their need for the interference of feeling, reason, objectivity and purpose.

Thus, it becomes clear that the organizing apparatus, the interference of reason and feeling, is a logical connection. You may say that the essence of the system, in its three pillars: interrelationship, symmetry and objectivity, call out in the tongue of their creation saying: "This order is the creation of a broad reason and a great feeling."

Determining Logical Connection between System and Interference of Feeling in Another Way

Reason sees the assembly of millions of conditions required for the stability of life on earth, so much so that if some of them are missing, life will lose its balance. It sees the assembly of thousands of parts and elements that are necessary for seeing, all being present to the eye, so much so that if a single part of them is missing, or if it lags behind its set place, the seeing process will lose its balance, and it will be impossible to see.

When these things happen, reason will judge that there is a tremendous reason that has set such a system and created this symmetry, harmony, order and coordination. It will also judge that there is feeling that has interfered in all of this. It will deny it took place by chance and coincident.

This is so because if their assembling can thus be through chance, it can likewise be through countless and innumerable other ways that are not suitable for it, and the possibility of the stability of this picture from among such a huge number of pictures becomes extremely weak. It will almost be a mathematical zero in being so minute, something that even an ordinary person, let alone a judgmental rational person, would reject.

Yes, this mathematical calculation is applied by the rational person. He witnesses the cosmic system which prompts him to rule that there is a rational cause that chose this picture from among numerous ones deliberately and willfully, combining those required conditions in this method which is suitable for life.⁵

Thus, the order proof remains strong, firm and safe against any criticism, and it is not connected to making any similitude or experiment as Hume had surmised. Rather, it is the judgment of only reason that is arrived at by observing the essence of the order without comparing it with something. Hence, what naturally exists and what is man-made will both become equal.

If reason refuses to submit that a watch came to exist without a maker, or that the car was found without a cause, it is for the sake of observing the same phenomenon (the watch and the car) where it is seen as having come to exist after it used to be non-existent, so it immediately rules that it has someone who causes it to come to exist. This judgment is only for the sake of a logical connection between a thing after its non-existence and the obligation of an active doer of it. If you may, you can say that it is for the sake of the law of cause and causation which reason recognizes in all fields.

Also, reason's judgment is in the position that the organized existent is the creation of a great mind. This stems from the logical connection between the system and the interference of the feeling, or the impossibility of the system surfacing by chance, due to the mathematical calculation above, not because reason drew an example or made an experiment, so it reached this conclusion.

To sum up, the nature of order and its essence in the things which we see calls upon us in the tongue of

its formation that it came up due to a doer who feels, a maker who is rational. This is what causes reason to surrender to the existence of such a maker who stands behind the cosmic order without looking at anything else.⁶

Second Proof: Possibility Proof

Explaining it depends on clarifying matters.

First Matter: Dividing what is reasonable into: what is mandatory, what is probable, and what is impossible.

Anything is regarded by the intellect as reasonable if we attribute to it existence and verification. So, it may or may not be thus characterized due to its own attributes.

Second Matter: Something that cannot exist due to the combination of both antitheses.

The first may or may not require its attributes to be required by its own essence. The first exists as a must due to its own essence.

The second can possibly exist due to its own essence, I mean the ratio in it of each of existence and void is equal.

In other words, if we imagine something, it may be in an external form which reason accepts or does not:

First: It is impossible (to do so) on its own, such as combining or removing both antitheses, the combination of the antitheses and the existence of the matter without a cause.

Second: It may either require its existence from its own essence and the need for it to exist in the outside; such is necessity for its own sake. Or its ratio is equal to existence and void, so neither transgresses. For this, it may exist or it may not, which is something possible due to its own nature such as humankind and others.

This division revolved between what is positive and what is negative, and there is no winner here, nor can it be imagined to be reasonable to suggest that there is something that does not fit in any of these three divisions.

Second Matter: Existence Relies On Its Cause

Regarding what exists due to its own essence, since the requirement for its existence lies in its own essence, its existence is not dependent on the existence of a cause that necessitates its existence because it does not need such a cause. Also, regarding what does not have to exist, it essentially requires the absence for the need for its existence. Therefore, its non-existence does not need a cause.

For this reason, it is said that what has to exist actually exists in it, while what does not have to exist requires the absence of the need for it to exist, both are independent of cause. This is so because the *need* for a cause is want and dependence. But what must be is so because of its own essence. What does not have to exist needs no reason for it to exist. What is as such, it does not have to be characterized by a cause: The first has existence for its own self, whereas the second is characterized by void due to its own essence.

As regarding what *may* exist, its similitude to existence and void is like the center of the circle compared to its circumference. Neither of them is preferred over the other. Each, in its own attribute, needs a cause that takes it out of the status of equality, dragging it either to the side of existence or to that of void.

Yes, the cause of existence must be something that has already existed in the outside (world). As for the cause of void, it suffices in it the absence of cause. For example, dismissing ignorance from an illiterate person and substituting knowledge in its place depends on existing principles. As for his maintaining illiteracy or lack of knowledge, it is sufficient these principles are not there.

Third Matter: Explaining Role and Sequence and Their Being Nil

Role means something that brings about something else while, at the same time, the latter causes the first to exist. This is false because the fact that since the first thing causes the second to exist, it means it has precedence over it, whereas the second lags behind it. The requirement of the second thing being a cause for the first to exist means it has precedence over it. And the result will be: A thing being in one status and related to one other thing, whether it advances ahead of it or not, lags behind it or not, this is a combination of two antitheses: Its being nil, like their rising in status over one another, is a necessity taken for granted. The result: The role and its requirement are impossible.

In order to explain it, let us provide you with an example. If two friends agree to sign a document, and if each of them preconditions, in order to sign it, that the other should first sign it, the result will be each signature depends on the other. In that case, such a document will never be signed till Judgment Day due to the impossibility we have mentioned.

Another example: If two men want to cooperate to carry some luggage, but each of them preconditions for carrying it that the other should do so first, this luggage will stay where it is indefinitely!

As regarding sequence, it is the combination of a series of causes and probable causations organized in an endless way. All will be characterized by possibility based on A depending on B and B depending on C and so on. Causes and causations are organized in this sequence without having a point at which they end.

Briefly, the truth about sequences does not get out of the limits of the order in which causes and causations are organized. They end on one side, I mean their final point, and they are endless on the

other, I mean their beginning. Based on this, the last portion is characterized by causation only, contrarily to all other parts. Each of them, since its cause depends on what is above it, becomes a cause for what is below it. Causation is a common description among all. It prevails over the chain, over all its parts, unlike the causation, for it does not apply to the last portion. This is the reality of the sequence; as regarding its falsehood, let us state the following.

The cause, as it is, just as it is a general description for all parts of the chain, it also is a description of the same chain, the same series. Also, since each series is subject to its cause, their total, which we describe as a series of accumulated causes, is likewise subject to the causation. It is then that this question forces itself: If the huge chain is rendered to its cause, what is the cause that took it out of the concealment of void and into the world of existence, out of the dark into the world of light? The need of the cause for causation is taken for granted.

The law of causation is one of the fixed laws that nobody denies except a stupid person or one who likes to argue about what is taken for granted. This is on the one hand. On the other hand, the chain did not stop and will never stop at a limit so the beginning of the chain would be described as a cause without causation. Rather, it continues, extending without stopping at a particular point.

Based on both of these matters, the chain is characterized by the attribute of causation without being characterized by the attribute of only the cause. It is then that this question comes back: What is the cause that brings about this caused chain, the one that takes it out of the concealment of void and into the scope of existence?

You can follow this logic in each of the rings of the series just as it is applied to the series itself. You can say: Since each part of the chain has a cause, is characterized by the attribute of causation, this question will then force itself: What is the cause that took each of these huge particles, which are described as having a causation, out of the scope of void and into the world of existence?

If the causation is the sign of want and of need for a cause, what is this cause that removed the dust of want from the face of these rings and outfitted them with the garb of existence and realization, making them rich with distinction?

The causation of the particles that are not separated from the chain's causation is the sign of being linked to the cause, the sign of being identified by something else. So, what is this cause to which parts stick, and what is this other thing to which the chain sticks?

If you ask each chain about its own status, it would answer you with the language of its composition that its existence is needed; it is linked in all its affairs to the cause that brought it into being. If such is the case with each of these chains, it is the same with regard to the entire chain. It is then that we deduct this result: Each of the series' parts has a reason, a cause, behind it, which is comprised of a series of causes.

The causation is not separated from the cause, and what is presupposed is that there is nothing that can be a cause while not being a reason for that cause. Otherwise, the chain would be broken, and it would stop at a particular point standing by itself. I mean there is nothing that is a cause without having a reason behind it's being as such: causation.

If you say that each cause in the series stands on the causation that precedes it, and it is connected to it, the first portion of the end of the chain was brought into being through the second, and the second was brought through the third, and so on, up to whatever Allah decrees of endless portions and infinite chains. This amount of connection suffices to remove want and need.

If you say the above, I would say that everything has a cause, even if it relies on a causation that precedes it and on which its existence relies. Yet since the causes in all stages are characterized by the attribute of causation, they are on their own, lacking. Such a thing has no causation independently. And it does not remove the dust of want from its face through originality, for these causes in all chains have no role innately, have no role to play in bringing themselves into being independently.

Rather, the role of these causes is intermediary, taking from the preceding cause and paying to the causation. Thus, each series can be imagined as the cause of what follows it. It then has nothing on its own but it has the end of the cause that precedes it. Similar to it is the case of the other causes without any exception.

Such a thing does not render the chain or its parts to its being innately rich. Rather, they stay as we have described: innately in need for and related to others. So, there has to be a cause behind this series that removes its want and acts as a support for it.

In other words, each of these series (with the exception of the last one) carries two attributes: the attribute of cause; it is due to this attribute that what precedes it exists; and the attribute of causation: It is due to this attribute that it announces that it did not have what it has and it did not pay what it paid to its causation except through the cause it had gained from its precedent.

This matter is current and dominant in every series and every particle that falls in the sphere of sense or intellect. Therefore, the same series, in all its parts, carries the attribute of want and need as well as relevance and linkage to others. Such a chain cannot exist by itself except due to an existent that carries one attribute: causation, and nothing else, one stripped of the attribute of being caused. It is then that the chain ends, coming out of infinity into finitude.

Two Examples for Explaining Non-Serialization

If you want to seek help in explaining rational facts with tangible examples, here are two examples for you.

First: Each of these caused things, to which we refer through reason even if we cannot refer to them

through the senses, are not infinite, due to their innate want to the zero point. The combination of these caused things is akin to combining zeroes. It is known that the zero, when added to another zero, remains a zero no matter how many zeros you add to it, producing no integer. For this reason, intellect judges that there has to be an integer so these zeros can be deciphered. Without it, the huge sum of these zeroes has no role at all in calculation; a zero is a zero no matter how many zeros you add to it.

Second: Conditional matters, if infinite and independent of an absolute case, do not come out to the world of existence. For example, if Zaid stands up only if Amr does so, and if the latter standing is dependent on Bakr, and so on, till the end, there will be no standing by any of them at all. The same condition applies to one signing a sheet of paper but preconditioning the second person to do so, whereas the second preconditions the third person to sign it, and so on, the sheet will never be signed at all. Rather, it is signed when someone stands up and goes to the sheet to sign it without preconditioning his action at all.

These sequential conditions, since the presence of any of them is preconditioned on the existence of a cause that precedes it, become infinitely sequentially conditioned issues. They do not come out to the world of existence unless they reach an absolute case, that is, an existent that becomes a pure cause, one whose existence is not dependent on any other cause. It is then that what we supposed to be sequential will terminate its sequence, and what we supposed to be infinite becomes finite.

Now we have reached this result: The supposition of infinite causes and causations is impossible because it requires a cause without causation. What is accurate is the opposite, i.e. the chain comes to an end, for there is no intermediary between what is positive and what is negative.⁷

Up to here, we have completed the Precepts that play a role in explaining the possibility evidence. Here is for you the same evidence:

Determining the Possibility Evidence

Undoubtedly, the page of existence is full of possible existents through the evidence that they become existent then they disappear, becoming non-existent. They are created, and then they are extinct. They suffer alteration and change, up to the conditions that are the evidences of probability and the signs of dependence.

These possible existents, which are located in the sphere of the senses, are either with or without a cause. Regarding the second probability, the cause may either be possible or necessary. The probable cause may come to be either through its causations (the possible existents) or through another cause.

Based on the first probability, that is, their being existent without causation, the law of cause and causation has to be repealed. Anything that can exist has to have an effect (that brings it into existence). For example, if we state that the cause is innate, in addition to a factor that voids its role.

Based on the second probability, that is, their coming into being (takes place) through a possible cause, and the possible cause brings about the existents, this renders the role to be impossible.

Based on the third probability, that is, they come to exist through another cause, and this latter comes to exist through another cause, and so on, this requires a sequence the error of which we have already disproved.

Based on the fourth probability, that is, the cause is a must; it is this that proves what needs to be proven.

It now becomes clear that the cosmic system cannot be explained except by saying that possible existents are rendered to a cause that by itself necessitates them. This picture is found to be accurate by reason that finds it to be free of confusion. As for the other pictures, they all require what is impossible, and what requires impossibility is itself impossible.

So, to say that they come to be (existent) without a cause, or that their cause is their own selves, is rejected by the causation law that is recognized by everyone. Also, to say that some of them come to be (existent) because of others, and these others come to be (existent) when the first are, this requires a role. To say that anything possible comes to be through a second thing, and the second comes to be through a third, and so on, this requires a sequence.

What remains is only to say that probabilities end at what is innately a must, what stands on its own, what brings about existence to others.

Probability Evidence in the Holy Quran

The Holy Quran has presented its sciences and bases supported by clear evidences, not contending with mere a claim without a proof. It is similar to a teacher who presents his lessons to his students through evidence and proof. Using these verses as evidence is not similar to a *faqih* using them to back his views about branches of the creed.

A *faqih* has proven that revelation is by itself evidence, so he undertook to classify the branches and to back them with evidences from revelation, even using them as evidences in this situation where we now are, as is the case with using other evidences inherited from wise men and theologians. The Almighty has referred in the following verses to the probability of deriving evidences.

Since the probability reality lacks existence for itself and does not by itself prove anything in particular, the Almighty has pointed out saying,

“O mankind! It is you who need Allah: But Allah is the One Who is free of want, worthy of all praise” (Qur’an, 35: 15).

It is similar to this verse:

“... It is He Who gives wealth and satisfaction” (Qur’an, 53:48)

and

“... Allah is free of want, and it is you who are needy” (Qur’an, 47:38).

Since what is probable, including human existence, cannot materialize except through a cause, and since its cause is not inherent, the most Praised One has pointed out saying,

“Were they created of nothing, or were they themselves the creators?!” (Qur’an, 52:35).

Since a creature cannot be the creator of another creature by originality and independence, without a must help from a Creator who creates, the most Glorified One has pointed out to this fact saying,

“Or did they create the heavens and the earth?! Nay! They have no firm belief” (Qur’an, 52:36).

So, these and similar verses rely on rational norms of knowledge through obvious evidences, without leaving them with no evidence.”⁸

Question And Answer

Question: The argument that (living) beings are rendered to an eternal Creator who is existent by Himself are neither created nor brought into existence by any other requires specifying the rational principle, for sound reason judges that a thing does not come to exist without a causation. What should be the case, from the theologians’ viewpoint, is that something takes place without a cause, so the rational principle needs to be revoked.

The Answer to this Argument is Multi-Faceted

First: This question is common to both theologian and materialist. They both admit the existence of an Eternal not brought forth by a cause. The theologian sees this Existent to be above the world of the matter, of what can be, and that everything probable ends with Him. The materialist sees this Existent to be the first matter that changes and transforms into pictures and conditions. He regards it as eternal, having come to be without a cause. Each of them should answer this question, not just the theologian.⁹

Second: The rational principle is interested in created existents and in the material phenomena in them. Since these are preceded by void, they are not separated from a causality that takes them out of the obscurity of void and into the world of existence. Had it not been for that causality, nothing that exists can come to be.

What is necessitated, in as far as the theologians propose, is a timeless Existent not preceded by void. Anything like this has no need for causality. Making and bringing into being are not attached to Him. They are characteristics of things preceded by void and cannot apply to things that are never preceded

by void, things that are in existence since time immemorial.

The inquirer does not analyze the subject of the principle, claiming that the need for the causality is one of the characteristics of a being through what brought it into existence, although it is one of the attributes of an existent that can be preceded by void. What necessitates is outside the subject of the principle, a departure from it, an act of specifying, not identifying, and the difference between the two is obvious.

Third: To say that created things end at a must existent being, which by itself is actualized, requires the rational proof which rules in all fields; so, its judgment cannot be accepted in one field rather than in another.

Reason, which admits the law of causality and causation, rules that existents must end at a must present being. Philosophers expressed this principle by saying: "Anything which coincidentally comes into being has to come to an end by itself." They also sought help to explain it from many examples such as: Everything is lit by light, and light itself provides light, the sweetness of sweet foods comes from sugar, and sugar by itself is sweet, up to the end of such common examples.

Chapter's Conclusion

You have been introduced to precepts of proofs of evidences of what can be, and the conclusion derived from it is based on both cycle and sequence being nil. Had it not been for taking both these matters for granted, analogy would have been futile and evidence unproductive. What we focus on here is that anything which leads us to prove the Maker cannot be productive except if it is proven prior to it that cycle and sequence are nil. Had it not been for surrendering to this, the proofs would have been incomplete, useless.

For example, the order evidence, which is the most clear and general of all evidences, cannot be productive and pointing to the world having a must Creator. The series of the cosmos end at Him except if it is proven before that that cycle and sequence are not possible. This is so because this marvelous system is a cosmic sign created by knowledge coming from someone whose knowledge is broad, whose ability is superior, and whose attributes can neither be described nor identified by man.

As regarding this knowledge being a must and ability being ancient, this is not proven by evidence: It is impossible for the Creator of this system to be another being, so it must either fall into a cycle or into a sequence. Proving that the system of the cosmos and the series of causes and causalities stop at a certain point is mandatory; it is not a probability, rich not poor, standing by itself not through others.

This requires surrendering to the void of cycle and sequence, as is obvious. It is as if one argues through the order evidence or all other evidences accepting their being taken for granted when he uses them in his argument.

Third Proof: Matter Creation Proof

Scientific principles have proven the continuous depletion of energies existing in the cosmos, their going in the direction of a degree at which the torch of life is out and because of which its activities terminate.¹⁰ This depletion and termination of energies proves that existence and the creation of matter do not happen on their own. Otherwise, had this existence come to exist on its own, it would have been necessary that it will not depart from it perpetually, eternally.

Their depletion and disappearance is the best evidence that existence is a casual thing for the matter, not coming out of its own essence. This requires its existence to have a beginning. If a beginning is not required, this description would be innate, as is the case with every innate thing. Yet if something innately has to have a beginning, it likewise has to have an end. Science has already proven that it does have an end.

In other words, the existence of a matter which is transformed into energy is not something innate; otherwise, it would have by necessity remained inseparable from it, and that a matter does not end at extinction and void, having neither life nor activity. The truth is that natural sciences have admitted that the might of the matter will come to an end. It will lose its strength and energy, die and become cold. The difference when it comes to an end provides evidence that the matter's existence is not innate. Since it is not innate, it must have a beginning, and this is what we mean when we say that matter is created (and does not create).

So far, we have explained the three proofs, and there are other proofs which remain and which scholars have discussed in books of logic. We would like to point out to their types.

1. The motion proof, which was invented by wise Aristotle and completed by the brilliant theological philosopher, "Sadr al-Mutaalliyen" (the one who is in the front row of Gnostics, a reference to Mulla Sadra al-Shirazi), is one of the best proofs
2. The proof of men of the truth which is mentioned by the supreme mentor in his *Isharat*¹¹
3. The proof of "al-assad al-akhsar" (put forth by a Sufi philosopher)
4. Sequence proof¹²

There remain some very interesting matters to which attention must be attracted:

First: A cause used by the theologian, and another cause used by the materialist.

Each of the theologian and materialist uses the word "cause", and each means by it something differently from that of the other.

The cause, as regarded by the theologian, is an overflow of existence over things, the one that takes

them out of void, making them existents after they used to be non-existent. Thus, the effect, in its matter, form and all affairs, will be vested on it. The cause is the one that gives the matter its existence, form and everything related to it, and it is the one that ultimately takes it out of the darkness of void and into the horizon of actuality.

In order to explain this, let us use examples from images and the human self. The self, *nafs*, creates images in the mind, forming them in it. Yes, the *nafs* seeks help in creating some images from external tangible models, but it may sometimes create in the mind images that have no similitude in the outside world, such as collective concepts like humanity, probability, etc.

Therefore, the cause to which the theologian refers is as such. Ultimately, the Creator created the matter, vesting on it its forms, surrounding it with a network of magnificent order which was not there before at all.

As regarding the cause in as far as the materialist is concerned, it creates movement and interactions in the matter. An example is: the carpenter who gathers logs from here and there and attaches some to others in a special way in order to form a chair. Another example is the builder who gathers bricks, mud, etc., from here and there and arranges them in a special engineering way so they may become a wall and a building. Or it may be like the fire that causes water to boil, turning it into steam.

Perhaps the materialist may expand in the use of the word “cause”, so he applies it to the same matter that is transformed into another matter, such as timber transforming into ashes, fuel into energy, electricity into light, sound, heat, etc.

Thus, it has been made clear that there is a huge difference between both terms. How would you compare the use of “cause” by the theologian about the One Who vested on existence its matter and shape and the term “cause” used by the materialist who describes what brings about motion in the matter, or in the matter being able to change into something else?

What has prompted the materialist to interpret the cause in this sense is his belief that it is ancient, and that the energies in it are ancient, that it is independent of the One that brought it into being. This contrasts the (belief of the) theologian who believes that matter is preceded by void. It has a cause and causality that brings it out of void into existence.

It is to these two terms that the wise theologian, [Grand Ayatollah Abd al-Ala (servant of the Most High)] Sabzawari [1910 – 1993] pointed out when he composed this poetry:

*The One that grants existence is the Doer in the divine's belief,
But the sophist describes the One that grants natural movement.*

Yes, the divine (theologian) may use the term “cause” to describe one that creates and grants motion even if he does not create the matter itself and its form. He, therefore, says, “The carpenter is the cause

behind the chair, the fire is the cause of burning, etc., expanding the use of the term.

It is in reference to what we have stated that the most Praised One says,

“... Then do you see? The (human seed [sperm]) that you eject [ejaculate]: Is it you who create it, or are We the Creator? We have decreed death to be your common lot, and We are not to be frustrated by changing your forms and creating you (again) in (forms) that you do not know. And you certainly already know the first form of creation: Why, then, do you not celebrate His praise? Do you see the seed that you sow in the ground? Is it you who cause it to grow, or are We the cause? If it were Our will, We would crush it to dry powder and you would be left in wonderment (saying,) ‘We are indeed left with debts (for nothing): Truly we are shut out (of the fruits of our labor).’ Do you see the water that you drink? Do you bring it down (as rain) from the clouds, or do We? If it were Our will, We would make it salt (and unpalatable): Then why do you not offer thanks? Do you see the fire that you kindle? Do you who grow the tree that feeds the fire, or do We?” (Qur’an, 56:58-72).

There is no doubt that man has a role to play in the forming of man, plants and vegetation, and Allah, praise to Him, too, has a role. But man’s role does not exceed his being effective through his movement. He throws the sperm into the womb, and he sows the seeds in the ground, he plants the trees and waters them. So, how can you compare him with the One Who vested existence on man, vegetation, trees, etc., in their matter and form?

Second: Our Holy Book contains texts about how our world, skies, earth and in-between them, came to be, and the verses in this regard are numerous. Here are some of them:

“The primal origin of the heavens and the earth is due to Him: How can He have a son when He has no consort? He created all things...” (Qur’an, 6: 101);

“Allah is He Who created seven firmaments and of the earth a similar number” (Qur’an, 65: 12);

“And Allah has created every animal...” (Qur’an, 24:45)

And

“Has there been a period of time when man was nothing (not even) mentioned?” (Qur’an, 76: 1).

Similar verses are many more.

Creation Of The Cosmos According To Traditions

The Imam and Commander of the Faithful Ali ibn Abu Talib, peace with him, has said in one of his sermons, “Praise is due to Allah Who leads (knowledge) to His existence through (knowing) His creation, through His recent creations to His eternity.”¹³

He, peace with him, has also said, "Praise belongs to Allah, the One, the Only One, the self-Subsisting, the Unique who did not come to be out of a thing, nor has He created what now is out of what used to be."14

He, peace with him, has also said, "He did not create things of eternal origins, nor out of precedents before them that were perpetual; rather, He created what He has created, perfecting His creation, forming what He has formed, making these forms very good."15

He, peace with him, has also said, "Stillness and motion do not apply to Him; how can what He creates be applied to Him?! How can what He originates and creates return to affect Him?! How can what He affects affect Him?!"16

Imam al-Hassan, peace with him, has said, "He created creation, so He is the Magnificent Originator; He innovated what he started, invented what he began."17

Till now, the research has covered the proofs of the existence of the Maker, providing glittering evidences. Now is time to look into His Names, Attributes, Actions, through His own favors, the Almighty that He is.

1. Science calls for Faith, p. 159.

2. Science invites belief, p. 159.

3. Chris Morrison, Science calls for faith.

4. Hume was born in Scotland in 1711 and died in 1776. He was regarded as one of the greatest skeptics. He recorded this skepticism in his book titled Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, a book written in the form of a dialogue between two hypothetical persons one of whom represents a skeptic in the order proof named Philo, and the other represents one who defends it, and he is named Cleanthes.

5. Refer to the fourth report for the order proof. In it, we pointed out in detail to what we state here.

6. The questions directed to the order proof are not restricted to what we have stated, though it is the strongest among them. The mentor (may his shade last) collected all the queries submitted about this proof which are more than seven in number and answered them in a book titled Allah: Creator of the Cosmos. One who wishes to expand may refer to pp. 220 to 279 of it.

7. The fallacy of sequence is one of the important issues in divine philosophy, and it was submitted by philosophers in their works, proving the falsehood through proofs more than ten in number. But most of them are not convincing because they reached the falsehood conclusion by relying on mathematical proofs which do not apply except to finite matters. The evidence we stated is a purely philosophical one derived from the principles of the sublime wisdom which were founded by Sadr ad-Din al-Shirazi. Their bases were set up by his school students the most prominent of whom in recent century is our late master, allama Tabatabai.

8. These verses contain clear proof that logical thinking from what is inspired by the Holy Quran attracts humanity to Him. Had philosophy meant sound thinking and proving provided by the claimant, its door would have been opened by the Holy Quran.

9. What is amazing is that British philosopher Bertrand Russell claimed that his main interest was in theology and his method required the existence of a thing without a cause, and by now you have come to know the opposite.

10. Science has clearly proven that there is a continuous transfer of heat from hot bodies to cold ones and that the opposite cannot take place through an innate power, so heat may revert from cold bodies to hot ones. This means that the cosmos

is going in the direction of a degree at which all bodies equalize and the source of energy depletes. At that time, there will be no chemical or natural process, nor will there be a trace of life itself in this universe. Since life still continues, and since chemical and natural processes are going along their paths, we can conclude that this cosmos cannot be perpetual; otherwise, its energies would have been used up a long time ago and every activity in existence would have stopped. Thus, sciences inadvertently reached the conclusion that this universe has a beginning. Briefly put, the laws of thermal dynamics indicate that the components of this universe are gradually losing their heat and are imminently going to the day when all bodies become under a very low temperature that is the absolute zero. It is then that energy will be no more, and life will be impossible.

11. Al-Ishaaraat, Vol. 3, p. 18.

12. Refer to Tajreed al-Itiqad, p. 67; Al-Asfaar, Vol. 6, pp. 36–37 and Vol. 2, pp. 165–66. One who wishes to become familiar with these proofs has to review the references that we have stated.

13. Nahjul-Balagha, sermon 152.

14. Al-Saduq, Al-Tawhid, p. 41.

15. Nahjul-Balagha, sermon 163.

16. Ibid., sermon 186.

17. Al-Saduq, Al-Tawhid, p. 46, hadith 5.

Chapter 3: Names And Attributes

His Names, Attributes, Actions, Praise To Him

It has been expected for the Gnostics to form one rank with regard to everything referred to the Initiator, i.e. to His Names, Attributes and Actions. But they all differed among themselves from the simplest matters to the deepest. Most of their differences are rendered to knowing His Names, Attributes and Actions. The difference in these matters is the cornerstone for the rise of religions and sects in the global human community.

The Dualists, despite their admission that there is a God Who created the cosmos; branch out into scores of groups and sects. Suffices in this regard to notice the Indian and Chinese lands where Dualism is found more than in any other place.

Christianity does not lag far behind them. This religion has been divided into Jacobite, Nestorian, Melkite (Melchite) and other sects.

As for the Muslims, who form a large nation of worshippers of God in the world, they also diverged into different sects. Most of their differences stem out of their differences about the qualities and actions of the Originator.

Here are Hashwi and Hanbali folks who have reported *hadith* and who have views of their own about the qualities of the Originator and His actions which can be reviewed by anyone who reviews books of

hadith, especially the *Tawhid* book by Ibn Khuzaymah, the *Sunnah* book by Ahmed ibn Hanbal and others.

No less than them are the differences among the Mutazilites, advocates of *adl* and *tawhid*. They have scattered into many sects. Some are Wasilis, others are Hazilis, some are Nizamis or Khabitis, up to the end of the list of sects.

As for the Determinists (Jabris or Jabrites) from among the Muslims, they have branched out into Jahmis, Najjaris, Dhiraris, etc., till Sheikh Abul-Hassan al-Ashari appeared. He brought an amended method compromising the hadith folks with the Mutazilites and Jabris. Therefore, the scholars focused on studying his beliefs and ideologies, so much so that it became an official sect (Asharism) followed by Ahl al-Sunnah.

These sects did not mostly differ except about His Names, Actions and Attributes. This matter provides this chapter about doctrines with an extreme significance. So, it must not be taken lightly, and it must not be bypassed easily, indifferently.

Self Attributes of Goodness and Greatness

His Attributes, Praise belongs to Him, are divided into two types: confirmative and negative, or aesthetic and majestic.

If an attribute confirms goodness in what it describes and point out to a reality in Him, it is called “self-confirmative” or “aesthetic”. If the attribute aims at negating some shortcoming or need from Him, the most Praised One, it is called “negative” or “majestic”.

Knowledge, ability and life are confirmative qualities that point out to the existence of perfection and are factual in the Divine Self. But negating physical qualities, space limitation, motion, are among the negative attributes that aim at removing what constitutes a shortcoming or what is lacking in Him, High above that is He.

Sadr al-Mutaalliheen, Mulla Sadra al-Shirazi, has pointed out to both terms, the aesthetic and the majestic, as being close to what is stated in the Holy Quran where the most Glorified One says,

“Blessed be the name of your Lord, full of majesty, bounty and honor” (Qur’an, 55:78).

The attribute of majesty means He is above being compared with anything else, while the attribute of honor describes His own Self, beautifying it aesthetically. Thus, He is described with attributes of perfection and is held as being high above everything and everyone through His majesty.

Scholars of creeds have restricted the aesthetic qualities to eight: knowledge, ability, life, hearing, vision, self-will, speech and independence. They also restricted the negative qualities to seven: He, the most Exalted One, is neither a body, nor an essence, nor an expanse, invisible, non-biased, not possessing

anyone and is not limited by anything.

Yet precision examining dictates that qualities must not be restricted to a particular number. It is true to say that the criterion in identifying aesthetic and majestic qualities is that anything described as being perfect, Allah is described as having it. And everything regarded as shortcoming and inability, He is held to be high above it, and we do not have to restrict perfection and majesty into a specific number.

Thus, all confirmative qualities can be rendered to a description, while the negative qualities are rendered to a matter. What supports our statement is that the Names and Attributes stated in the Holy Quran are many times the number stated by scholars of logic.

A dispute has taken place about what has been regarded as confirmative attributes, that is, whether they are among the self-confirmative attributes from which a Name is derived, or if they are confirmative through actions, such as speech and will, so much so that some of those counted as self-qualities in some methods are not among the qualities of the self at all, such as His being Truthful, but are qualities relevant to actions. You will come to know the difference between them.

Entitative and Operative Attributes

Logicians have categorized His Attributes, Praised is He, into entitative and operative. The first suffices to describe the entity, if we suppose we can only describe the entity, such as might, life, knowledge, etc.

The second depends on describing the Self, if we suppose all others are beyond the Self, i.e. they resulted from His actions, the most Praised one.

Operative attributes are derived from the position of action. In other words, the Self is described by these attributes when observed with the action, such as beings, sustenance and such actions that are superfluous on the self, due to being derived from the action. The meaning of “being derived” is that we notice the blessings people enjoy and attribute to Allah, Praise to Him, calling them “sustenance,” the sustenance that He, Praise to Him, provides, for He is *the* Sustainer. Similarly are mercy and forgiveness, for they are attributed in the same way that we have explained.

There is another definition for distinguishing the self’s attributes from those of the action. Everything that takes place to the self on a unison order (always positively) is one of the attributes of the self. What takes place on the self on both ways, the negative once and once the positive, is one of the attributes of actions.

In the light of this distinction, knowledge, might and life are not attributed to Him, Praised is He, except in one way which is the positive one. But creating, sustaining, forgiving and affording mercy are attributed to Him once positively and once negatively. You once say that He created this and not that, He forgave one who sought His forgiveness and did not forgive one who insisted on sinning, etc.

Briefly, one who has self-attributes cannot be characterized as having their antitheses, nor can he be free of them, whereas one who has operative attributes can be characterized as having their antitheses as well.

Moreover, the operative attributes are existentialist considerations. They result from one description: aseity¹ (not derived, or independent, existence). To create, sustain and guide are all entities that exist through Him, Praise is due to Him, originating from Him due to His aseity.

Another Classification

Attributes have another classification: entitative and additive. What is meant by the first is the adjective of the self without an outside affiliation being noticed to belong to it or added to it, such as life. The opposite are the additive attributes. These are added to something outside the self, such as knowledge about what can be known as well as the ability for what can be done.

According to this order, each of the entitative and additive attributes is applied to the self, describing a reality in it.

The additive one may be interpreted as the creative, sustaining and causal. The first is called extractive, rather than additive, and the additive is specifically applied to what contrasts the entitative.

Descriptive Attributes

There is another term used by logicians as they classify His Attributes, Praised is He. They divide them into entitative and descriptive. What is meant by the first are the attributes of perfection and by the second what the Praised One has described Himself in the Holy Quran, such as His being high, having a face, two hands, two eyes and other such terms found in the Quran. If applied to Allah Almighty according to the conventional meanings, these attributes will connote embodiment and assimilation.

These are the common classifications in describing the most Praised One.

Keeping a Distance from Assimilation and Analogy: Basis of Knowing the Attributes of the Praised One

A human being who is used to living between the walls of time and place is accustomed to identifying things through time and place, describing them as occupying a space and having dimensions, identifying them through how and how much, in addition to other requirements of the matter and descriptions of a body.

Being used to sensing and feeling things all his life, man's attachment to matter, his feeling comfortable with being on earth, have made him used to striking a similitude for anything relevant to him in the tangible way. This is so even with regard to things that cannot be subject to the senses or (even) to imagination, such as the reality of totalities and facts that are stripped of matter.

What supports him in this regard is that man arrives at what can be rationalized and regarded as a whole through the senses and the imagination, for he is comfortable with the senses, accustomed to imagination.²

It is as though humans are naturally bent on knowing something based on analogy and similitude: They cannot strip themselves of it except through exercise and training. The habit that is inseparable from man is his feeling comfortable with matter, his being used to knowing everything within its material frame, to drawing imaginary pictures of his Lord according to matters with which he is familiar, to the ones which he can identify through his senses. Rarely does man direct his attention to the courtyard of dignity and pride, his soul is empty of such assimilation.

Assimilation and Dissimilation

On this basis, gnostics have kept their distance from making a similitude in which one compares his Lord to a human having flesh, blood, hair, bone and real bodily parts: a hand, a leg, a head, two eyes, awe-inspiring, dark hair or bright white hair, one that can move from one place to another and even shakes hands!³

The latter folks have become involved in the embodiment detriment, in the perdition of assimilation. To deny the existence of a creator having these repugnant material descriptions is much better than proving him to be the lord of the worlds. Believing in a creator that has such qualities renders godhead and the call to it as something abhorred, one from which enlightened minds and thoughts turn away.

If that group is reckless in its assimilation and extremist in embodiment, we find as its antithesis another group that wanted to protect itself from the stigma of assimilation and the infamy of embodiment, thus falling into the entrapment of obstruction. It has ruled to obstruct the minds from knowing Him, Glory belongs to Him, from knowing His Attributes and actions. It says that nobody has the right to judge the Supreme Principle through any ruling, nor is there a way to knowing Him other than the recitation of what the Quran and Sunnah state.

It says: Salvation, all of it, lies in recognizing everything brought by the sacred Sharia without a research or a discussion, without an argument or a research. Here is al-Maliki saying the following when asked about the meaning of the verse that says, “He seated Himself firmly on the Arsh”’: “The firm seating is understood, its method is unknown, believing in it is obligatory, while asking about it is an innovation.”⁴

Sufyan ibn Uyaynah is quoted as having said, “All the descriptions provided by Allah in His Book (Quran) are interpreted through recitation then through remaining silent about it.”⁵

But there is a third group that is of the view that it is possible to get to know His Attributes, Glory to Him, through contemplation, the arrangement of logical criteria and the order of logical proofs in the light of the blessing of reason and intellect bestowed by Allah, Praise is due to Him. This is conditional on the researcher being neutral, not biased to any premeditated opinion, and that he has to be sincere to the

truth in his research and discussion, seeking nothing but the truth.

Their argument in this regard is that Allah, the Glorified One, did not state His Names and attributes in His Book (Quran) and the Sunnah of His Prophet (S) except so man would ponder about them through his reason and intellect within limits, according to what can be done, avoiding assimilation and excessiveness in being obstructive. This is advocated by reason, the Revered Book (Quran) and the sound Sunnah.

A precious statement by Imam Ali (as) advocates a midway path. He (as) has said, “He (the Almighty) did not acquaint the minds with determining how He is, nor did He obstruct them from the need to get to know Him.”⁶ This statement aims at saying that although the minds are not permitted to determine the Divine characteristics, they are not obstructed from seeking such knowledge as much as possible. The most Praised One has said,

“I did not create the jinns and mankind except so they might worship Me” (Qur’an, 51:56).

Accurate and perfect adoration is not possible except when the achievable knowledge of the worshipped One becomes available.

Suffices in determining this path what is indicated in the first verses of Surat al-Hadid (Chapter of Iron, Ch. 57), which we would like to quote, seeking their blessing:

“Whatever is there in the heavens and on earth declared God's Praise and Glory, for He is the One Exalted in might, the Wise. The dominion of the heavens and the earth belongs to Him; it is He Who gives life and death, and He has might over all things. He is the First and the Last, the Evident and the Immanent, and He has full knowledge of all things. It is He Who created the heavens and the earth in six days: moreover, He is firmly established on the throne (of authority). He knows what enters the earth and what comes forth out of it, what comes down from the heavens and what mounts up to it. And He is with you wherever you may be. And Allah sees well all that you do. The dominion of the heavens and the earth belongs to Him, and all affairs are referred to Allah. He merges night into the day, and He merges the day into the night, and He has full knowledge of the secrets of (all) hearts” (Qur’an, 57: 1-6).

Does any rational person think that the verses near the end of Surat al-Hashr (Chapter of the Gathering, Ch. 59) were revealed by Allah Almighty for merely reading and reciting them? In them, the most Praised One says,

“Allah is He besides Whom there is no other god; He knows (all things), hidden and open; He is the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. Allah is He besides Whom there is no other god, the Sovereign, the Holy One, the Source of peace (and perfection), Guardian of the faith, Preserver of safety, the One Exalted in might, Irresistible, Supreme: Glory to Allah! (He is high) above the partners they attribute to Him. He is Allah, the Creator, the Evolver, the One Who bestows forms

(shapes or colors). The best names belong to Him: Whatever there is in the heavens and on earth declares His praise and glory, and He is the One Exalted in might, the Wise” (Qur’an, 59:22–24).

Otherwise, what is the meaning of the pondering to which reference is made in these Quranic verses?

Thus, we realize the extent of weakness that some scholars of ancestry preferred when they said, “We are granted reason in order to establish adoration, not to realize godhead. If one exerts what he has been granted to establish adoration through realizing godhead, he misses adoration and will never realize godhead [either].”⁷

Establishing full adoration is pawns by knowing who the adored One is as much as one can do so. Otherwise, the entire world, in all its particles, praises Allah, Glory belongs to Him, praising Him, adoring Him. Through the sense of realization which suits His presence. The most Glorified One says,

“The seven heavens and the earth, and all beings therein, declare His glory: Not a thing exists that does not celebrate His praise, but you do not understand how they declare His glory! Truly He is oft-Forbearing, Most Forgiving!” (Qur’an, 17:44).

Had man’s function be to establish adoration without the detailed knowledge of the One Whom he adores, adoring Him would be similar to adoring all other existents, even much lower than that. Man can get to know in detail the One Whom he adores according to the extent of intellectual might he is given and which nobody else has.

If realizing godhead is meant to be realizing the essence of the Self, it is impossible, and nobody ever claimed it. If knowing His Names, Attributes and Actions is sought, within the human capacity in the light of logical criteria, the Quran and the absolutely sound Sunnah, this exactly is the function of reason. We all see how the most Praised One describes in negative terms the polytheists who did not know Him as He deserves to be known, according to the human ability, saying, the most Praised One that He is,

“They have not made any just assessment of Allah, for Allah is He Who is strong and able to carry His Will out” (Qur’an, 22:74).

Briefly, had the objective been knowing the Divine essence and the reality of His Attributes and Names, abandoning the search would have been justified. But if the goal is to know the goodness and perfection, to negate what anyone may imagine about the Divine Self having a shortcoming or an incapacitation, there is no doubt that reason can explore this field, and it can reach this goal.

Sound Ways To Knowing Allah

His essence, Praise belongs to Him, Names, Attributes and Actions, though not similar to what the sensed world is, are not impossible to know in one way or another. From this onset, we find the men of wisdom and logicians treading different paths to knowing the features of the Divine world. They see that

this world is not outside the scope of realization. Rather, there are windows that overlook what is known, what is rational and what is derived. It is through them that this great broad world can be seen.

Here below we would like to point out to these ways:

Rational Way

Nothing is needed to prove that He, Praise belongs to Him, is independent, not in need of anything. This matter can be a starting point for proving many of His Attributes of greatness. Any description that requires a shortcoming in His independence and something lacking in Him has nothing to do with Him, and it must be stripped of His entity.

Naseer ad-Deen al-Tusi, the Islamic philosopher, undertook this path to prove a group of Attributes of Greatness. He said, "The need for existence proves that He is eternal. It negates what is superfluous, that He has a partner, a similitude, a composition, an antithesis, a space, an incarnation, a unification, a direction, events that affect Him, a need, an absolute pain and a transient pleasure, the superfluous meanings, conditions, attributes and vision."

Actually, this critic set out of this principle to prove a series of positive attributes when he said, "The need for existence proves that existence is positive, and so are the (attributes of) dominion, completion, soundness, goodness, wisdom, dominance, control and aseity."⁸

He was preceded in doing so by the author of *Al-Yaqut* who said, "It (the need to exist) negates a group of attributes from the Divine Self, and that He is not a body, nor is He an essence, nor a causality; events have no impact on Him; otherwise, He would have been an eventuality."

Thereupon, the perfection and goodness that exist in the divine world can be rendered to the evidence of one principle, that is, He, the most Praised One, is an independent existent whose existence is a must in order to disprove the serialization which you have already come to know. Proving His independence and the need for His existence is not a problem for the souls.

From this, windows open to overlook the unknown and to get to be familiar with His positive and negative Attributes, and you will come to know the proof for these Attributes through this method.

Reviewing the Horizons and the Souls

Among the ways and principles through which one can come to know Allah's Attributes is reviewing the cosmos that surrounds us, for it reveals a broad science, an absolute might that knows all its hidden details, all the laws that dominate beings. Through this basis and path, that is, reviewing the cosmos, mankind can be guided to a large portion of aesthetic Attributes.

Thus, it becomes clear that the essence of Allah, the Praised One, and His Attributes, the likes of Whom do not exist, are not obstructed from absolute knowledge, not located within the horizon of sensibility so

we would say that the minds are obstructed from them. We say that

“We have been granted reason in order to accurately adore Him, not to realize what godhead is all about. The Holy Qur’an has ordered [the faithful] to follow this path. The Praised One says, “Say: ‘Behold all that is in the heavens and on earth,’” (Qur’an, 10: 101);

“Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day there are indeed Signs for men of understanding” (Qur’an, 3: 190),

and

“Truly, in the alternation of night and day, and in all that Allah has created, in the heavens and the earth, there are Signs for those who fear Him” (Qur’an, 10:6).

This path has been treaded by critic al-Tusi in proving the Attribute of knowledge and might. He says, “Perfection, dispossession and every-thing relying on Him is evidence of knowledge (of knowing Him).”⁹

Referring to the Quran and Authentic Sunnah

There is a third principle on which those who follow the Sharia rely. It is getting to know His Names, Attributes and Actions from the texts of divinely revealed books and statements of prophets after His existence, Praise belongs to Him, and some of His Attributes have already been proven. We have already established that the prophets were sent by Allah and that they are truthful in everything they said.

Briefly, due to the medium of *wahi* (inspiration), which neither errs nor slips, we can become familiar with the Supreme Originator’s attributes and affairs. An example is derived from these verses:

“Allah is He besides Whom there is no other god, the Sovereign, the Holy One, the Source of peace (and perfection), the Guardian of faith, the Preserver of safety, the One Exalted in might, Irresistible, Supreme: Glory to Allah! (He is high) above the partners they attribute to Him. He is Allah, the Creator, the Evolver, the One Who bestows forms (shapes or colors). The best names belong to Him: Whatever is there in the heavens and on earth declares His praises and glory, and He is the One Exalted in might, Wise” (Qur’an, 59:23-24).

Divulging and Witnessing

There is a small group that sees, through the hearts’ eyes, what visions do not realize. It sees His goodness, greatness, attributes and actions through the heart’s realization. He is realized by His friends and is not described for others.

Intrinsic divulgence, spiritual witnessing and meeting that take place in the heart are not shut off by token of the text of the Glorious Quran: The Praised One has said,

“O you who believe! If you fear Allah, He will grant you a criterion (to judge between right and wrong)” (Qur’an, 8:29),

that is, He will cast in your hearts *noor* (celestial light) through which you can distinguish between right and wrong, between what is sound and what is false, not through proofs and deductions, but through witnessing and divulging.

The most Praised One has said, “O you who believe! Fear Allah and believe in His Messenger, and He will (then) bestow upon you a double portion of His Mercy: He will provide for you a light by which you shall walk (straight in your path), and He will forgive you (your past wrongdoing), for Allah is the oft-Forgiving, the Most Merciful” (Qur’an, 57:28). What is meant by “*noor*” here is the one in the light of which a believer walks throughout his life, in seeking means for his livelihood, in preparing himself for the Hereafter, in matters relevant to his creed and everyday life.¹⁰

The most Praised One has also said,

“As for those who strive in Our (cause), We will certainly guide them to Our paths” (Qur’an, 29:69).

And there are other such verses that clearly show that a believer reaches branches of knowledge and realities in the light of struggle and piety, so much so that he in the end is able to see hell in this materialistic life. The Praised One says,

“Nay! Were you to know with certainty of mind, (you would beware)! You shall certainly see Hell-fire!” (Qur’an, 102:5-6).

Yes, not all those who shoot darts hit the mark, nor are facts arrived at by darts. Rather, the most exemplary one reaches them, followed by the less exemplary, and so on. Nobody earns the unknown revelations and innate victories save the very few people whose souls are sincere and hearts pure.

This extensive research has showed that a Muslim must not keep himself from attempting to be acquainted with the Attributes of Allah and His Names in the pretext there is no similarity between humans and their Creator.

Yes, we do not claim that some of these ways are easy to tread by everyone. Rather, some of them are general and available for everyone who wants to know his Lord. And there are those particular ones from which the individual who has attained a certain amount of knowledge can derive benefits.¹¹

Why Avoid Researching Metaphysics?

There are groups that refuse to look into what is beyond this visible world, regarding its material limits the utmost of what the human knowledge can grasp, stripping the knowledge relevant to metaphysics as

the limit of human knowledge. What is amazing is that some of these groups are gnostics who believe in the existence of a god, but they do not permit looking into metaphysics at all, contending themselves with believing in him without knowledge.

Here we explain these groups for you:

First Group: Materialists

They are the ones who believe in matter's originality, denying the existence of a world beyond nature; existence according to them is equivalent to matter. We finished voiding this theory in the previous researches that led us to matter taking place, its system and conclusion about the existence of a Maker who is self-subsistent.

Second Group: Some do away with Tools of Knowledge

These folks believe in metaphysics, but they believe in the loftiness of the peaks of such world, so much so that the minds cannot reach these peaks and comprehension cannot grasp them. They claim something while not producing an evidence for it. Reason has intuitive issues, and it has theoretical issues that end at intuition. Intuitive issues are true through intuition with regard to matter and to non-matter.

Also, the mind concludes that theoretical issues in natural matters end up at intuition, results which used to be unknown, for thus does it fare with issues that are beyond matter. You will come to know about how to prove His Attributes and Actions through this way in the folds of this book.

Third Group: Claimants of Divulgence and Witnessing

These folks think that the only way to getting to know what is beyond nature, i.e. metaphysics, is to cultivate the soul and prepare it to accept outpourings from the divine world. This, as a whole, is not doubted, but to restrict the way to divulgence and witnessing is a claim that lacks evidence. There is no objection for the tools of knowledge to abound from the senses, reason and divulgence.

Fourth Group: Hanbalis and some Asharis

These people think that the only way to get to know the divine world is through reports of the heavens. So, we have no right to judge whether the divine is one or many, whether it is simple or complex, if it has a body or is without one, except through reports that reach us from the heavens. These folks have forgotten that reason is a divine element granted by Allah Almighty to man so the latter may be able to discover facts in a relative way. The Almighty has said,

“It is He Who brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers, when you knew nothing, and He gave you hearing, sight, intelligence and affection (so) that you may grant thanks (to Allah)”

(Qur'an, 16:78).

The most obvious proof of the mind's ability to look for and study the higher and lower facts is that Inspiration urges us to use our minds in as many as seventy-four verses, to ponder and contemplate in eighteen verses, and to deeply discern in four verses of the Holy Qur'an.

To say that all these verses specifically concern only the senses is specificity without evidence.

Had wading into looking for what is beyond the matter been prohibited, why did the Quran wade into these topics, inviting all gnostics to tread this same path which it treads? The most Praised One has said,

"If there were other gods besides Allah in the heavens and the earth, there would have been confusion in both! But glory to Allah, the Lord on the Throne, high above what they attribute to Him" (Qur'an, 21:22)

and

"No son did Allah beget, nor is there any god along with Him: (Had there been many gods,) behold! Each god would have taken away what he had created, and some would have over-powered others! Glory to Allah! (He is free) from the (sort of) things they attribute to Him!" (Qur'an, 23:91).

You can see in both of these verses the most precise evidences for the Unity of God, for pondering about what no mind can grasp beyond Him. You will get to know the interpretation of both of these verses when we research the topic of *Tawhid* (Unity of Allah).

The Holy Quran condemns the polytheists because they believe in something for which they have no proof. It draws the right path for the gnostics thus: They must get the evidence of everything in which they believe, from the start and to the end. The most Glorified One says,

"Or have they taken (other) gods for worship besides Him? Say: 'Bring your convincing proof: This is the message of those with me and the message of those before.' But most of them do not know the truth, so they turn away" (Qur'an, 21:24).

Had the actions undertaken by the ancestors in this regard been evidence, here is Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (as) wading into the divinities in his sermons, letters and short statements in a way that nobody else can.

For this reason, many rational intellectual schools of divine knowledge refer to the Imam (as). The Mutazilites have learned *Adl* and *Tawhid* (Justice and Unity of Allah) from him, and the Imamites (Shias) have learned their principles and tenets.

So, we do not know why the Salafis of our present and past centuries employ the actions of Hanbali and Ashari men of traditions, using them as an argument, rather than using those of the Commander of the Faithful, Ali ibn Abu Talib (as), who was raised in the laps of the Prophet (S) whose first student he was, and the Commander of all faithful Muslim.

Allama Tabatabai (may Allah have mercy on his soul) has said, “People undertake different paths in this field. There are those who look at searching for religious facts and see what is beyond the appearances of the Book (Quran) and the Sunnah as innovation. Reason proves them wrong in this regard, and the Book and Sunnah do not prove them right, either.

“The verses of the Quran emphatically urge pondering on the Signs (miracles) of Allah and exerting an effort to complete the knowledge about Him, to get to know His Signs through remembering, contemplating, looking into them and seeking evidence through rational arguments, and various consecutively reported Sunnah agrees to it. These are the folks who prohibit looking for the facts of the Book and the Sunnah, even looking into logical research which is based on first accepting the religious appearances then defending them through the celebrate, famous precepts, that are taken for granted by theologians.”¹²

A Return to the Theory of Narrators of Hadith in a New Method

The theory of the people of hadith has returned in the present century in a new method. An investigation into the issues of divinity cannot be done except through reviewing nature. Muhammad Farid Wajdi has said, “Since our opponents rely on senses-based philosophy and natural science in inviting to their creed, we make it our pillar in these researches; rather, we have no choice except to rely on both of them (philosophy and science) because they are the ones that have enabled man to reach this pinnacle of spiritual age.”¹³

Sayyid Abul Hassan Nadavi (al-Nadawi) has said, “The prophets (peace with them) told people about Allah’s self, adjectives and actions, about the beginning of this world and its destiny and the attacks to which man will be subjected after his death. All this knowledge reached people through them (prophets) without toil. They spared them the trouble of having to search and examine sciences the principles of which they do not have, nor do they have their Precepts on which they set up their research so they may reach the unknown.

This is so because these sciences are beyond senses and nature. Their (people’s) senses do not work with them. Their vision does not reach them, and they have no preliminary knowledge of them.” He continues till he says, “Those who delved into divinities without rationale and without guidance brought this science repugnant ideas, incomplete information, casual thoughts and hasty theories, so they strayed and led others astray.”¹⁴

I say: There is no doubt that the Quran calls for reviewing nature, as has already been stated. But we are talking about the extent of sufficiency of looking into nature and studying it in order to prove issues

that the Holy Quran has presented such as in these verses:

“There is nothing like Him” (42:11).

“To Allah do the best names belong” (20:8; 59:22).

“Wherever you turn, God's presence is there” (2:115).

“He is the First and the Last, the Evident and the Immanent, and He has full knowledge of all things” (57:3).

“And He is with you wherever you may be” (57:4).

There are other researches and branches of knowledge in which the study of nature and the review of the material world do not help deciphering their codes or grasping their realities. Rather, we need principles and rational precepts as well as logical bases.

Reviewing the natural world guides us to the cosmos having a Maker Who knows and Who is Able; it does not guide us to His being, Glory to Him, knowledgeable of everything, ability to do everything, creating everything, managing everything.

If we want to determine the extent of knowledge that results from looking into nature, we can say: Discerning nature gets us to reach the limits of metaphysics, it informs us that nature is subject to an omnipotent might and to an able and capable administrator. But man cannot go beyond this to issues which the Quran or reason submits. Let us say the following as examples:

First: If what is beyond nature is the source of nature, what is the source of metaphysics themselves?

Second: Is the said source eternal or created, one or more, simple or complex, having all attributes of goodness and perfection or not having them?

Third: Is there a limit for his knowledge?

Fourth: Is there a limit for his might?

Fifth: Is he the first of things or the last?

Sixth: Is he inside things and outside them?

Such information is presented by the Holy Quran with an order to contemplate on them:

***“Do they not then earnestly seek to understand the Qur'an, or are their hearts locked up?”
(Qur'an, 47:24).***

Scrutinizing nature does not help one answer these questions and become familiar with the branches of

knowledge presented in the Quran.

It is then that one of two paths must be attempted. Looking into these branches of knowledge must be obstructed and prohibited. Or one must admit the existence of a rational way to analyze these branches of knowledge and help us become familiar with them.

Those who ban delving into these researches rely on (the presumption that) becoming acquainted with the truth about the self and the essence of its characteristics is impossible. But not every logical research reaches such a limit and tries to find out the truth about the Divine Self as we have already explained.

Natural sciences have served the path of theologians, strengthening their positions, proving that the cosmos is an entire order, but they are unable to resolve all problems submitted in the field of doctrines.

Yes, delving deeply into these researches is not available for everyone, and it is not easy for everyone who seeks it. They are similar to an “inaccessible ease” because man, due to feeling comfortable with things which he can sense, finds it difficult to free his intellect from the things which his circumstances impose on him so he may be ready to contemplate on metaphysics with a mind free of the shackles of the matter.

There is another facet for man’s limits which restricts him from realizing the depth of divine sciences. The tools of expression which man uses are limited to terms and words that were not put except to explain meanings for limited things that are identified through the senses. For this reason, there is no choice other than expressing the supreme cosmic realities that are beyond time and place with these narrow expressions. To this does one gnostic refer in this verse of poetry:

*A robe threaded with 29 (alphabetical) letters
Is surely short of its full meanings!*

The main mentor, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), recommends that complex theological matters should not be submitted except to those who are apt to them. In a resignation at the end of his book he says, “Brother! I have produced from these signs the pith of the truth, feeding you with both scales of judgment, in niceties. So, keep this away from ignorant folks and those who are vulgar, who are not blessed with brilliance, with treading the right track, with following the right habits, those who feel comfortable with pleasant aromas. They should keep it away from atheist philosophers and from their commoners. So, if you find someone the purity of whose inner self you trust, someone who stops when insinuation rushes to him, one who looks at righteousness with pleased and truthful eyes, give him what he asks you. Give it to him in steps, in parts, organized, preparing what you give him in advance to be of benefit to him when you give him something else after that. Take his covenant and let him swear to it by Allah and by his *iman* that he will not reveal them except as he follows your example. If you disseminate this knowledge or if you lose it, Allah suffices me to judge between us, and He suffices for a Judge on my behalf.”

We do not claim that these researches are common knowledge that anyone can explore, due to the precision of their paths and abundance of slipping places. Rather, they are particular for a group of people who are gifted with a superior intellectual prowess.

For this reason, we submit the divine sciences in the light of reason and inspiration, deriving from Allah, Glory belongs to Him, assistance to show us the right way, to protect us from surmounting falsehood, surely He is Exalted, Wise.

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1. Only the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) has this word, aseity, defining it as above! Take it from me! And you can find it on the Internet, that is for sure. –Tr.
 2. Al-Mizan, Vol. 10, p. 273.
 3. Al-Milal wal Nihal, Vol. 1, p. 104.
 4. Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 93.
 5. Ibn Taymiyyah, Al-Rasaail al-Kubra, Vol. 1, p. 32.
 6. Nahjul-Balagha, sermon 29.
 7. Al-Hujja fi Bayan al-Mahajja, p. 33.
 8. Tajrid al-Itiqad, in a chapter confirming the Maker and His Attributes, pp. 178–85.
 9. Ibid., p. 172 (Al-Irfan Press, Saida, Lebanon).
 10. As regarding life in this world, it is the noor to which the Praised One refers when He says, “Can he who was dead, to whom We gave life and a light whereby he can walk among men like one who is in the depths of darkness from which he can never come out?” (Qur’an, 6:122). As regarding the Hereafter, it is referred to by the most Praised One in this verse: “One Day you will see the believing men and the believing women, how their light shines forth before them and by their right hands” (Qur’an, 57:12).
 11. In order to get to know the keys to this chapter, you have to refer to Mafahim al-Quran, Vol. 3, pp. 244–59.
 12. Tabatabai, Al-Mizan الميزان, Vol. 8, p. 153.
 13. Ala Atlal al-Mathhab al-Maddi أطلال المذهب المادي, Vol. 1, p. 16.
 14. Matha Khasara al-Aalam ماذا خسر العالم, p. 97.

Chapter 4: Self-Positive Attributes

Knowledge

Theologians are unanimous about knowledge being one of the perfect self-attributes of Allah, and that “al-Aalim العالم” is one of His Supreme Names (Attributes). No two persons contest it, so in order to explain, we have to prepare for the topic with a precept.

What is Knowledge?

Knowledge is defined as an image resulting from a thing on the mind's page. Or it is a reflection coming out on the mind when one is in contact with the outside. Men of wisdom have derived this definition from the sciences in circulation among people.

But this definition is incomplete because it does not cover some sections of knowledge. Knowledge is categorized as either incidental or ever-present. The said definition suits the first rather than the second. Let us explain both categories for you.

When man casts a look at the outside and observes the cosmos that surrounds him, the trees and the rocks, the sun and the moon, etc., he earns a realization, and the outside thing is realized only through the mediation of an image between the person who realizes and the thing which he realizes. This image is extracted from the outside through tools of knowledge, and then it moves to the centers of comprehension.

Trees are identified when they are exhibited, the image is known through the self, whereas man is the one who knows. We have called the thing as being in the outside known through exhibiting and the image as being known through the self because the outside is known to us via this image, without it, the link between man and reality is severed.

In other words, the outside reality is not present with us in this feature because the outside thing has an outside effect such as heat coming out of fire, wetness from water, weight from rocks and iron, etc. It is known that the outside thing does not come to our minds with these characteristics. For this reason, the outside thing has become known through exhibiting and the image is known through the self due to man always experiencing mental images.

Thus, you come to know the definition of incidental knowledge. It is the knowledge in which the outside reality is known not by itself but through the mediation of an exact image of it. All tools of the senses are employed in the service of this knowledge. It depends on three pillars: one who realizes, the outside, and the image. Do not think that this is an admission of the originality of the image and of the outside being a branch thereof.

There is no doubt that the matter is the opposite. The outside is the origin and the image is extracted from it, telling us about it. But what the mind practices and employs is the image that it has, not the same outside. This mental image is its only means to realize the outside and to be aware of it.

Up to here, you have come to know the definition of incidental knowledge. As regarding the ever-present knowledge, it is the realizing person being aware of the presence of what he realizes without the mediation of anything, and it has two parts:

1. There is no mediation between the realizing person and what he realizes, while the first is not being

aware of the reality. This knowledge is reached through the same image that is extracted from the outside. This is so because the outside is realized through the image. As for the image itself, it is known by the self, and there is no mediation between it and the realizing person. When one comes in contact with the outside through the mental image, he will achieve two types of knowledge: One is incidental in its capacity as knowledge of the outside through the image method, and one is present by regarding his knowledge as having been attained through the same image, its presence and reality being realized by the individual.

Thus, you come to know an essential difference between both norms of knowledge. What is known in the incidental knowledge is not present to the one who realizes it in its reality, as you have come to know. With the ever-present one, what is known is present with him in its reality, and this is similar to the mental knowledge image. Through its reality, which does not depart from being a mental existent thing, it is present to man. Thus, the incidental knowledge has three branches, whereas what is ever-present has two in as far as this part is concerned.

2. Knowledge in which there is no mediation at all between the person who realizes it and what he realizes is united through the self and is different according to noticing and considering. It is like man knowing and realizing his own self. The reality of every human being is present by itself with him, not absent from him. He sees himself rationally, senses it through his senses and conscience, and sees it present with him without any mediation between the realizing person and the self that he realizes.

In this case, knowledge becomes unilateral, not bilateral and tripartite as is the case in the first part (above). It is then that the one who realizes and what he realizes are both united, and man's self becomes knowledge and a discovery. Among the present knowledge is man's awareness of his feelings, happiness and pain. They all are present without any mediating image.

Thus, you come to know about the weakness of the conclusion about man's presence having taken place through his own thinking, so it is said, "I think, therefore I exist." It seeks evidence from the presence of thinking to indicate the presence of the thinker.¹ The aspects of weakness are:

First: Man's knowledge of himself is a necessity, it does not need a proof. Man's contemplation is not clearer than his self-awareness, his being aware of his knowledge of his entity, of himself.

Second: The one seeking evidence has admitted the result at the beginning of his evidence when he said "*I* think." He has taken his presence as being pre-supposed, taken for granted, and then he has tried to find evidence of it.

Inclusive Definition

In the light of what we have stated, i.e. dividing knowledge to incidental and present, it is accurate to say that knowledge, in the absolute sense, is "the presence of what is known with the one who knows it."

This definition covers knowledge in both its types.² Yet what is present in the first is the mental image rather than the outside reality. In the second, it is the same reality of what is known without any mediator between it and the one who knows it.

The mental image in the incidental knowledge is present with man, not absent from him. Also, the same man in the present knowledge is present with him, within him, since it is standing on its own. It is called knowledgeable. Since it is exposed to itself, not absent from it, it is regarded as being known. Since there is presence, not absence, this presence is called knowledge.

This definition is comprehensive, inclusive of all types of resulting knowledge in what is possible and what is a must. If you grasp this precept, the research in His knowledge, Glory to Him, stands once on its own and once due to His actions (the things that are outside His entity).

His Knowledge, Glory to Him, of Himself

His knowledge, Praise is due to Him, of His entity is not incidental, i.e. He takes the image from the Self and witnesses it through such a way. The reason is that such type of knowledge cannot be known about Him, as we will see later. Rather, it is ever-present, i.e. He is present by Himself and for Himself. Two evidences prove it:

First: One who grants perfection cannot lack it.

He, Praise belongs to Him, created mankind and the world by Himself through His ever-present knowledge. One Who grants such perfection has to create it in the best of way, the most perfect, because one who lacks perfection cannot grant it. He creates it the best that it can be. Although we are not familiar, and we will never be familiar, with the particularity of the ever-presence of His self with Himself, we refer to this knowledge as “the presence of His entity is with Him, and His knowledge of it without an intermediary is obvious.”

His knowledge, Glory to Him, of Himself

His knowledge of Himself, Glory belongs to Him, is not incidental, that is, He takes the image from the self and witnesses it through this way. This is not so because this type of knowledge does not apply to Him as you will come to know. Rather, it is present, that is, He is present for His own self. There are two matters that prove it:

First: One who bestows perfection cannot be lacking it.

He, Glory belongs to Him, created man, who is aware of his presence at present. One Who grants this perfection has to be creating it in the best and most perfect way because one who lacks perfection cannot be the one who bestows it; He surely is the One Who creates it as best as can be. Although we are not, and we will never be, familiar with the particularity of His presence by Himself, we term this

knowledge as “the presence of His entity with Him and His knowledge of it without a mediation in-between.”

Briefly, one who enjoys intellectual commonsense does not find it rational to think that one who grants perfection can be without it, lacking it; otherwise, the one who receives the boon will be better than the one who grants it, and the one who is deriving the benefit is better than the one who grants the benefit. Since all possibilities have been proven to be rendered to Him, including the Knowledgeable entity itself, it becomes a must that the One Who creates this perfection should be knowledgeable by Himself, knowledge which is innate, not superfluous.³

Second: Factors of absence and disappearance of the self are non-existent.

To explain, we say that since the material existent is present in quantity, ratios and parts that have no collective presence, since its parts do not gather in one (and the same) status, some of its parts are absent from others. So, it is not right for the material existent, due to its being a matter, to be aware of itself by itself due to the absence that controls its own parts.

Absence contrasts the presence of the self. It prevents the attainment of the self-knowing itself (by itself). So, if the one who is present is above being absent, taken apart, his parts can be put together, a simple existent, as a whole, rather than parts and particles, his entity is ever-present, and it has an absolutely complete presence. Thus, we see the presence of our selves by our own selves, but not in the sense of some parts of our bodies being present, but in the sense we have the presence of a human reality expressed by the term “I” which is above quantity, parts and particles.

So, if we suppose there is an existent at a high level of abstraction and simplicity, having no absence factors, which are among the features of a material being, his entity is present with him. This is the meaning of His knowledge, Glory to Him, of His own Self, that is, an innate presence that stands by itself in the most perfect way because it is above being material, a composition and a division as you will see the proof for His simplicity when we discuss the negative attributes.

There are other proofs that we have avoided in order to be brief. Yet some folks deny that He knows through His own self, and here is the explanation of their belief.

Self-Knowledge Requires Variation

Those who deny His knowledge, Glory to Him, of Himself by saying that knowledge is a standing ratio between the one who knows and the thing which he knows, and the ratio is usually between two different things, and the ratio of the thing to itself is impossible, since there is no variation here, nor is there duality. Briefly, the one thing, I mean the Almighty, Glory to Him, is One, a ratio cannot be imagined as existing in Him.

Critics have rebutted it with this gist: Multiplicity and variation exist in incidental knowledge because it is

the adding of the one who knows to the outside through the mental image, so in it, the known image is not the same as the outside identity. As regarding present knowledge, there is no requirement in it to have external variation; rather, multiplicity suffices for consideration.

For example, He, Glory to Him, has an entity that is never absent from Himself. So, He knows, and since His entity is ever-present, it is known.

In other words, the terms of: knowledge, one who knows, something known, etc. are used for the sake of calculations and considerations. Considering the self's revelation to the self is called "knowledge", and the self is exposed to the self is called "a piece of knowledge." Considering its familiarity with itself is called "knowledgeable." If you consider how man gets to know himself, it may be easier for you to believe in all of this.

What we have stated is due to the critics saying that differentiation may be through the self, and it may be through a sort of consideration. Here, the Self of the Almighty, since it is knowledgeable and is different from it because it is known, this suffices for knowledge to be attached to it.⁴

His knowledge, the Glorified One, of Things before Creating Them

His knowledge, Glory belongs to Him, of things is of two types: pre-creating knowledge, post-creating knowledge. The first is the one that we see to be one of the most important issues in the science of logic. Here is the proof for it:

Knowledge through Causality is Knowledge of Causer

Knowing the cause, as a cause, is knowing the causer, the one that caused it. Knowing the objective, as such, is knowing the existence of its effect. What is meant by knowing the objective is knowing the method which became a principle for the presence of the effect and for its taking place. In order to explain this principle, we use the following examples.

Knowing Causality is Knowing the Causer

Knowing the cause, as a cause, is knowing the causer, the one that causes it. And knowing the reason, as a reason, is knowing the effect. What is meant by the cause is knowing how it became a principle for finding the effect, for making it happen. In order to explain this principle, let us provide the following examples:

A. An astrologer who knows the astrological laws and cosmic computations gets to know that the eclipse of the sun or of the moon or the like takes place at a certain time or in a particular situation. His knowledge of these eventualities is nothing but his knowing the cause behind them.

B. The physician who knows the cases and types of the pulse as well as the conditions and situations of the heart can predict what will happen to a patient in the future. Such knowledge is nothing but his knowing the cause as such.

C. A pharmacist who knows the particularity of poison when one drinks it can inform us that the life of such a person will end at a certain period of time.

If you come to know these examples, we say that the world, all of it, is the effect of His Presence, Glory belongs to Him, and has no cause other than Him, Praise belongs to Him. Knowing the self is knowing the way that caused the world to come to be, the cause behind its existence.

In other words, knowledge the self, the indications of which you have already come to know, is knowing the way the entire cosmos came to be, and knowing this way is attached to knowing the effect. This evidence is based on precepts taken for granted by the theologians to the summary of which we would like to point out as follows:

First: The world, in all its parts, relies on Him, the most Praised One that He is, and this is the requirement for the Unity of the Creator, and that there is no creator other than Him.

Second: The causality of something is that it includes a particularity that requires the effect producing it, and it definitely positively requires the presence of the effect in the outside so as without this particularity, the effect will not come to be. For this reason, there is a special connecting link between the standing particularity relevant to the cause and the existence of the effect that requires the existence of the effect. Had it not been for that particularity, the ratio of the effect to the cause, and to others than lack it, would have been equal, although it by necessity is nil.

The particularity that exists in the fire, which brings about heat, is not the same particularity that is present in the water, which brings about wetness.

Third: His effect, the Almighty, on others is through His own Self, not through an incidental particularity, an entity that is superfluous to Him. He by Himself is the doer of everything, as is required by the simplicity of His own Self and His lack of need for anything at all (the superfluous particularity) beside Himself. The most Praised and Exalted One by necessity is the doer on His own; He does not act through a method attached to His own self.

Fourth: Knowing the entity that requires a thing is knowledge of the thing itself.

This discussion results in concluding that the Knowledge of the Almighty, by itself, is the knowledge of His particularity, entity, and it is inseparable from Him, I mean His knowledge of things requires such a connection, a link.

Great men of logic and philosophy have pointed out to the above. The head of theologians, Mulla Sadra (Sadr ad-Deen), has said, "The Self of the Praised One, as the cause behind all things, due to the

latter's presence, and the knowledge of the cause requires knowing their effects; realizing them from this standpoint requires their arrangement one after the other.”⁵

The wise Sabzawari refers to the same in a poem in which he says:

*One who knows things other than Him and who relies on Him
Testifies to the cause behind the knowledge as one
Of knowing the effect, an unavoidable must.*⁶

Precision and Perfection Prove His Knowledge of What He Makes.

Noticing any simple or complex set (an electronic pen or a computer) tells us that its maker is one who knows the laws and relations that govern it. A huge encyclopedia points out to the knowledge of those who wrote and compiled its texts.

In other words, the existence of the effect indicates the existence of the cause. Its details lead to its being particular to its own cause. The precision of composition of the things that exist in the world, as a creation of Allah, Glory to Him, prove that their Maker is knowledgeable of what He creates, familiar with what He makes. The details that make up a created thing lead us to the Attributes of the One Who has created it.

This evidence has been of interest to thinkers. What is made indicates, from the standpoint of arrangement of parts, that is, the parts are made for each other in order to serve the purpose of what is made, that it did not result from a maker who is not familiar with these details. Rather, it was made by a maker who organized it for a purpose, so he has to be knowledgeable of it. If man looks at a house, he will realize that the foundations were made for the wall and the wall was made for the ceiling, etc. He will conclude that the house was built by one who is knowledgeable of the building industry.

The conclusion is that whatever is made, its precision, minute details, marvelous system, certain and exact amounts tells us that its maker is fully familiar with these laws and symbols, knowledgeable of the measurements and systems the made item needs. From this onset, the cosmos, starting from the infinite atom and ending at the gigantic constellation, from the tiny cell to the largest planet, the systems and the very precise plans, tells us that the Creator of the cosmos is fully knowledgeable of all the secrets and laws it contains. It tells us that it is impossible for Him to be ignorant of them.

The Holy Quran has referred to this evidence when it said:

“Should He not know, the One Who created, the One Who understands the finest mysteries (and) is well acquainted (with them all)?!” (Qur’an, 67: 14).

The Almighty has also said,

“We have created man and We know what dark suggestions his soul makes to him” (Qur’an,

50: 16).

Our Imam, the Commander of the Faithful (as), has said, “He knows what shall be and what was; He created the beings with His knowledge, initiated them with His wisdom.”⁷

Imam Ali ibn Mousa al-Ridhah (as) has said, “Praise be to the One Who created creation with His might, perfected what He created with His wisdom and placed everything in its place with His knowledge.”⁸

It is to this evidence that al-Tusi, the critic, pointed out in abstracting belief saying, “... And precision is evidence of knowledge.”

So, you say that some animals may perform precise actions in organizing their homes and ways of living, as is the case with the bees, ants and many beasts and birds, although they are not masters of knowledge.

I say in response: The precision in action, which we have stated, proves that the doer’s knowledge is a mental case not liable for specificity. As for these animals, their work is the result of inspiration from their Creator as Quranic texts have stated. The most Praised One has said,

“And your Lord taught the bees to build their cells in hills, on trees, and in (men’s) habitations. So eat of all the produce (of the earth), and find the spacious paths of your Lord with skill: From within their bodies, a drink of varying colors comes out in which (there) is healing for men: Truly (there) is a Sign in this for those who ponder” (Qur’an, 16:68-69).

Interpreting these wonderful actions, some people may render them to animal instincts. This does not contradict what we have stated. Mute instincts are no more than a blind matter that cannot find something balanced except when there is a higher command that leads them to what they are required to do. And this interpretation has room somewhere else.

His Knowledge, Glory to Him, of Things After Creating Them

You have come to know evidences about His knowledge of Himself and of His actions before creating things, and it is time now to look into His knowledge, Glory to Him, of His actions after creating and forming them. In this regard, we contend ourselves with both following evidences:

His Knowledge, Glory to Him, is Action

The external things end up in their status of existence at Allah, Glory to Him, and everything ends up at Him. Every effect is present at its cause, not being absent from it, nor is it obstructed from it. You have come to know the fact that knowledge is the presence of what is known with the one who knows it.

In other words, every existent thing other than Him is possible, be it is an essence and is incidental, external or mental. All are colored with the color of possibility, and there is no avoiding relying on it.

Reliance is only presence with Him, His being fully acquainted with it, Glory to Him.⁹

In order to explain this evidence, we say this: Every possible thing is affected, in its coming into being, by Allah, the Glorified One. The effect has no meaning other than being attached to its cause and its standing for it in reality like the literal meaning of a noun. Just like the literal meaning, in all its affairs, it stands through the meaning of the noun, so is the effect. It stands through its cause. Just as the literal meaning being cut off from the name ends its presence, so is the effect when detached from the cause: It ends up at its being non-existent.

If you say, "I started my course from Basra," there are noun meanings: course and Basra, and there is a literal meaning which is the starting of the course from that city. But the second meaning stands on both sides; without them, it cannot stand on its own. Similarly is the effect, that is, the possible implementation of presence. It stands through the one that implements it, not through its own actuality other than its being attached to its cause.

Otherwise, it will be required to be independent, and this, if we suppose it is possible, trails it. If there is such a thing, it will be outside its own cause. Getting out of its limits requires independence that cannot exist with something being probable. There must be caution in its regard and never abandon such caution since all things are present with Him. Presence is knowledge: You have come to know that knowledge is the knower possessing what is known.

Thereupon, the world, just as it is His doing, so is His knowledge, Glory to Him. In order to bring the picture closer to comprehension, notice the mental images created by the soul on the mind's stage. They are the doing of the self and, at the same time, they are knowledge of them. The self does not need, in order to know these images, other images.

Likewise, the self encompasses these images, and they stand through the One Who undertakes them, who creates them. Such is the world in its precision and magnanimity: a creation of Allah, Glory to Him, which is sustained by Him. He fully encompasses it.

Expanse of His Presence is Evidence of His Knowledge

Irrefutable evidences have shown that His existence, Glory to Him, is above having a body, a matter, time and place. It is above any time or place restriction. Something like this has an unlimited and endless presence. Limits and restrictions are outcomes of a thing being restricted by time and place.

What exists in time and place does not go beyond the frame of its environment. As for the thing that is above these two restrictions, nothing limits it, nor is there anything that confines it. A thing the condition of which is as such knows everything and is not confined to anything. Rather, it encompasses everything.

In order to bring an example that brings the picture closer to comprehension, let us say that one who sits

in a room and looks to the outside from a small opening in the wall does not see but a portion of the passing train. He is the opposite of one who stands on the roof or looks from a higher angle, such as from a plane.

Based on this principle, the more one is stripped of restrictions, the more and more knowledge of things he will have. Allah is above time and place, above each and every limit and restriction. Nothing encompasses Him that is located within the frame of time and place. Rather, He encompasses everything that takes place on the stage of existence.

Imam Ali (as) has pointed out to some of what we have stated saying, “Allah, the most Exalted and the most Great, is the ‘where’ of the ‘where’; there is no ‘where’ for Him. He is too great to be confined to a place, He is everywhere without getting in contact with a thing, without neighboring a thing. His knowledge encompasses it; nothing is empty of His management.”

We are going to recite some holy verses as we research His knowledge, Glory to Him, of the details.

Levels of His Knowledge, Glory to Him

It has become obvious from the above that His knowledge of things, Glory to Him, is of two levels:

First: He knows them before bringing them into existence, and you have already come to know the evidence for it.

Second: He knows of them after getting them out of the status of the self, and you have already come to know its evidence. All this is based on philosophical proofs. But the Holy Quran reminds us of His knowledge through manifestations which it sometimes expresses as the Preserved Tablet, other times as the Unfolded Scroll, a third time as the Clear Record, a fourth time as the Well-Guarded Book, a fifth time as the Guarding Book, a sixth time as the Book of Destiny, a seventh time as simply the Book, an eighth time as the Clear Imam, a ninth time as the Mother Book and a tenth time as the Tablet that blots out and confirms.

To the Preserved Tablet, the most Praised One refers saying,

“Nay! This is a glorious Qur’an, (inscribed) in a preserved tablet” (Qur’an, 85:21-22).

To the Unfolded Scroll He refers saying,

“By a decree inscribed in a scroll unfolded” (Qur’an, 52:2-3).

Referring to the Clear Record, He says,

“.. nor anything fresh or dry (green or withered) but is (recorded) in a clear record (for those who can read)” (Qur’an, 6:59).

To the Well-Guarded Book He refers saying,

“That this indeed is a most honorable Qur’an, in a well-guarded Book” (Qur’an, 56:77-78).

To the Guarding Book, the Almighty refers saying,

“We already know how much of them the earth diminishes: With Us is a record guarding (the full account)” (Qur’an, 50:4).

To the Book of Destiny (term of death), He refers saying,

“Nor can a soul die except by God’s leave, the term being fixed in writing” (Qur’an, 3:145).

When He simply refers to the Book, He says,

“We gave (clear) warning to the Children of Israel in the Book...” (Qur’an, 17:4).

The Holy Quran makes a reference to “the Clear Imam” in Surat Ya-Sin:

“We have taken account of all things in a clear Imam” (Qur’an, 36:12).

To the “Mother Book”, the Almighty refers saying,

“And indeed it is in the Mother Book, in Our presence, high (in dignity), full of wisdom” (Qur’an, 43:4).

And to the Tablet that blots out and confirms, the Almighty refers saying in His Book,

“Allah blots out or confirms whatever He pleases: The mother of the Book is with Him” (Qur’an, 13:39).

We have contended ourselves with referring to each Book with one verse although there are many.

Scholars of exegesis have differed among themselves about the truth of these books and their details. Some say that they are stripped of matter and material, so much so that it is right to regard them as manifestations of His endless knowledge. And there are those who say that they are material tablets and books in which things, their life spans and periods are recorded by way of symbols. Both opinions cannot be taken for granted. Rather, believing in them and looking into their exegesis must be done through the Book (Quran) and the authentic Sunnah.

It is also regarded, among the manifestations of His knowledge, is decree and destiny that we will discuss in a special chapter by His leave.

Two interesting items have to be pointed out here:

His Knowledge, Glory to Him, is Presential, not Incidental

You have come to know the difference between the incidental and the presential types of knowledge, so we do not wish to repeat ourselves. But what must be pointed out is that His knowledge, Glory to Him, of His own self and of His action is presential. As for His knowledge of His entity, it is due to such entity never being absent from Him, it is always present with Him. As for His knowledge of things, you have come to know that it is of two types.

First: Knowledge of the self is knowledge of the calculation that results in things, and knowledge of such calculation is knowledge of things. Thus, it becomes clear that His knowledge, Glory to Him, of Himself reveals in detail the things in the way that is appropriate for Him.

Second: The presence of probabilities whenever necessary. What is probable stands through the presence of the Creator, Glory to Him, in its taking place and in its sustenance. His being self-sustaining, Glory to Him, is like the meaning of the letters composing a name. This type of existence does not permit absence, for the latter spells its non-existence and annihilation. So, if the possible existents have this characteristic, how can one imagine that He is separate from them?

It is nothing but supposing their non-existence and non-presence. Thereupon, the world, in all its particles, is the outcome of His own action, Glory to Him, of His own bringing it into being. At the same time, it is present with him. Such presence is His knowledge. Allah's knowledge and His action are two different concepts, but they are in agreement on the outside.

As regarding whether or not He has beyond the present knowledge an incidental knowledge, researching it is the task of detailed books. Peripatetic philosophers have claimed that He, Glory to Him, has an incidental knowledge that they label as painted images.

His Knowledge, Glory to Him, of Details

It is amazing how some philosophers go as far as denying His knowledge, Glory to Him, of details. They are influenced by some flimsy misconceptions. You will be familiar with the answers to some of them. Carefully discerning what we have stated about the probable existents, you will find it obvious that His knowledge, Glory to Him, of the details is quite clear. Its reality is clear if you understand how creation is, how existence is only due to the outgiving of Allah, Glory to Him, and here is its explanation:

The cosmos, with everything it incorporates, from the atom to the constellation, regenerates; it is always changing, not only in its incidental characteristics and outer shapes but also in its essence and entity. What appears to the onlooker to be fixed, stable and immovable in the natural world is actually the fault of the senses. The reality is different. In all its atoms, matter is subject to alteration, change and flow in every time and place.

The meaning of change in the world of the matter is the regeneration of its existence, the flowing of its

coming to be time and over again. Every material phenomenon is preceded by a time void. The presence of matter, which came to be through a gradual and flowing process, is like a spring the water of which continuously gushes out. It does not have a presence, firmness, immobility and stability.

If creation and existence are the outcome of a gradual and sequential process, and the effect cannot come out of the limits of its cause, it seems that the world, in its atoms and particles, as it was made by Allah Almighty, is known to Him. Gradual outpouring and presence in the form of a gradual process which He, Glory to Him, has set up, necessitates His knowledge, Glory and Exaltation belong to Him, of the outer details.

Deniers' Misconceptions

You have already come to know that His knowledge of the particulars, Glory to Him, and the rest of discussion in analyzing the misconceptions raised in this field, and here are their explanations:

First Misconception: Knowledge of Details Inheres Change in His Knowledge

They have said that if He, Glory to Him, knows the details that go on in the cosmos, it becomes mandatory for His knowledge to change according to the change of what is known. Otherwise, conformity would have been non-existent. Since time details change, and had they been known to Allah Almighty, this would have necessitated change to His knowledge, which is impossible.

This has been explained by *allama* Ibn Maytham al-Bahrani who says, "Some of them have denied His being knowledgeable of the details according to the changing partial variable; rather, He knows them as things that are comprehensible essences. Their argument is that had He known that Zaid was sitting in this house, after his departure, when His first knowledge remains, becomes ignorance, and if it is removed, change becomes a must."¹⁰

Misconception Analyzed

This misconception is extremely weak, and its rebuttal is:

First: The revocation might. If knowledge of details requires it to change when what is known changes, it also becomes a must to change its ability due to its being relevant to details, while the ability is one of the characteristics of the self. So, what is the answer in the ability aspect, and what is the answer in the knowledge aspect?

Second: Through resolution. Our knowledge of events that are in various periods of time is knowledge of time, as for His knowledge, the most Exalted One that He is, it is not conditioned by time at all. There is no present, past and future here. These adverbs are relevant to time when measured according to time-related existents, the time in which one lives. When one does something, it is said that he is doing it during a particular time. What he did is labeled as past. And what he will do is called future.

As for what exists outside the frame of time, environment and place, it cannot be imagined in His regard

that there is any past, present and future. Allah, Glory to Him, knows all fractional events as a whole, not with regard to some of them taking place in the present, some in the past and some in the future. Rather, He knows them through knowledge that is inclusive, one that is above being subjected to time conditions.

In other words, since the Almighty does not occupy a space (just as He is never subject to time), relating Him to all places alike is not by measuring them with Him so as one would say that it is near, distant, medium. Thereupon, His relevance to all things, in all times, is one and the same. What is present since time immemorial, and what remains forever, is attributed to Him and there is nothing in His knowledge that “was”, “is” and “will be”.

Rather, they all are present with Him in all their details but not with regard to time having anything to do with them according to their three characteristics. They cannot be applied to Him, the most High. Such knowledge is not variable but continuous, such as the knowledge of totalities.

In order to bring this closer to comprehension, we bring about this example. If the street is full of cars that pass one after the other, and if someone is looking at them from a narrow window, he sees each moment a passing car. The cars will then, relevant to him, be of three types: one has already passed, one is now passing and one is yet to pass. This division is sound as related to him in this situation.

Based on this premise, the existent which is above the restrictions of time and the limits of place is familiar with all things once, and the changing existents are painted with the hue of stability in as far as He is concerned.

Knowledge in the example brought while explaining the misconception, that is, Zaid sitting for a while at home, then he came out of it at another time, is relevant to sitting and coming out once and there is no sense here for advancing and delaying.

Another Way to Resolve Misconception

This misconception is based on the supposition that His knowledge of things, Praised is He, is incidental through the drawn images that stand through Him, Glory to Him, the change in what is known will then be concurrent with the images that stand through Him. This will require His essence being the place for change and alteration.

But if we say that His knowledge of the details, Glory to Him, is presential, that is, the things, in their outer identities and self realities, are the products of His own doing, Glory to Him, and at the same time His knowledge, there is no objection, then, to say that a change has taken place to His knowledge, Glory to Him, as a result of a change that took place to the existent things.

This is so because the knowledge that depends on His knowledge is the one described as being innate. As for the operative knowledge, that is, the knowledge that stands in the position of an action, there is no objection if it changes as His action changes. The knowledge that stands in the position of the action is

no more than the knowledge of the same action and nothing else. It is to this conclusion that the critical-Tusi refers when he says, "The changes of additions is possible."¹¹

In other words, change is what is added, not in the entity itself. What is meant by additions is His action, which is His knowledge. There is no objection for a change to take place in the additions and attachments while no change takes place to the entity itself.

Second Misconception: Realizing Details Needs a Mechanism

Realizing the details needs material tools and physical mechanisms, while the most Glorified One is above having a body or physical requirements.

The answer to this misconception is obvious. Knowledge of details acquired through material tools is the affair of one who is not familiar with how to perpetuate their maintenance, and things do not stand through him but are present in his possession, such as humans. Man's knowledge is through extracting images through sense-related tools. Therefore, realizing details depends on these tools and on their functions.

When it comes to the Almighty, since His knowledge encompasses all things, and since He truly sustains them, His knowledge does not depend on tools and on their functions.

It is to this answer that the virtuous al-Qoshaji refers as he explains abstraction saying, "Realizing details needs a physical mechanism if the knowledge (of them) comes through extracting images. But if it is a pure addition, without an image, there is no need for it."¹²

Third Misconception: Knowledge of Details Requires Plurality

Knowledge is an image that is equivalent to what is known and drawn to the one who knows it. There is no doubt that things have various images. The abundance of known things requires abundance of the single self from all aspects.¹³

The answer to this misconception, as you have already come to know, is clear, too. It is based on His knowledge of things being drawn within Him, Glory to Him, similarly to things drawn within the human self, so this requires plurality in the single self. You have already come to know that His knowledge of things is not like that. Rather, the outside identities are present with Him, with His Self, without any images, and this type of knowledge is stronger than that in which things produce images.

Fourth Misconception: Knowledge of Details Requires Turning What is Probable into a Must

If knowledge of a variable takes place prior to its variation, such knowledge becomes a must. Otherwise, it is possible there is no such requirement. Hence, His knowledge, the most Exalted One, turns into ignorance, which is impossible.¹⁴

In other words, the knowledge of the most Exalted One is not relevant to events prior to their taking place. Otherwise, this will require the events being both possible and a must at the same time. As for the first, it is due to their taking place. As for the second, without Him, it would be possible that they would not have existed; thus, His knowledge turns into ignorance.

The answer to this misconception is obvious. What is impossible is the combination of what can by itself be and also what must by itself be. As for the combination of what by itself is possible with what must be (existent) as a must through others, there is no doubt about it. The effect, in the full presence of the cause, is by itself probable and a must through others.

Thereupon, if His knowledge, Praise belongs to Him, hinges on the presence of an event at a particular time, His knowledge, Praise belongs to Him, does not get Him out of the self probability. The ultimate requirement for His knowledge (of something) being in agreement with the reality is that something exists through something else, whether the cause behind it is Allah, Glory to Him, or someone else, and it is in agreement with what is probably by its own self.

Briefly, the event that takes place during a certain circumstance does not get out of the limit of probability after being attached to His knowledge, the most Exalted One, and the full cause for it takes place. The creation, all of it, is possible by itself while, at the same time, it is a must through someone else.

The Holy Quran and the Expanse of His Knowledge, the Most Exalted One

From what we have already stated, we can grasp the greatness of the (Quranic) phrase that says, "Allah's knowledge encompasses everything." It means that the Almighty knows what has already passed, what will come to pass, and what is in existence in the universe, the secrets and the symbols.

The most Praised One says,

"The keys of the unseen, the treasures that none but He knows, are with Him. He knows whatever there is on the earth and in the sea. Not a leaf falls but with His knowledge: There is no grain in the darkness (depths) of the earth, nor anything fresh or dry (green or withered), but is (recorded) in a clear record" (Qur'an, 6:59).

The most Praised One also states,

"Say: 'Whether you hide what is in your hearts or reveal it, Allah knows it all: He knows what is in the heavens and what is on earth. And Allah has might over all things'" (Qur'an, 3:29);

"Allah knows what every female (womb) bears, and that of which the wombs fall short (of term) or exceed. Every single thing is before His sight in (due) proportion" (Qur'an, 13:8);

“We have created man and We know what dark suggestions his soul makes to him, for We are nearer to him than his life-vein” (Qur’an, 50: 16),

and

“The One Who knows the unseen and from Whom not the least tiny atom in the heavens or on earth is hidden, nor is there anything less than that, or greater, but is in a clear record” (Qur’an, 34:3).

There are other verses that refer to the Almighty’s knowledge of all details.

Loftiness of the Quranic Expression About the Expanse of His Knowledge

One of the most complex concepts is imagining the concept of what is infinite as a fact and a reality. Man is still dealing in his life with limited matters. Therefore, imagining something infinite is a very difficult problem for him. This system, the stars that it contains, is only a portion of our expansive constellation. Despite that, the part and the whole are endless in as far as the particles and compositions are concerned. The largest figure an ordinary individual knows how to use in his life is the billion: the number 1 before which nine zeros line up.

Also, the human civilization, because of its coming to perfection through mathematical sciences, has reached what is called astronomical numbers/figures. Nevertheless, all numbers, including the “astronomical” ones, which mankind has reached, cannot be described as infinite. When the Holy Quran wants to explain His knowledge, Glory to Him, as being infinite, it does not use numbers and mathematical figures or even the “astronomical” ones because they all end up at a certain limit/point.

Instead, it brings about a superb example that shows the expanse of His knowledge. He says,

“And if all trees on earth were pens and ocean (were ink), with seven oceans behind it to add to its (supply), God's words would still not be exhausted (in the writing), for Allah is Exalted in might, full of wisdom” (Qur’an, 31:27).

Look at this magnificent expression which is superior to all others, and see how you find no mathematical figure that depicts the expanse of His knowledge, Glory to Him, equivalently to His saying “...God's words would still not be exhausted”. If one were to say that the extent of His knowledge is the figure one before which there are hundreds of zeros, he will not convey the meaning of His statement: “...God's words would still not be exhausted”. Thus, you come to know the truth of His statement, Glory to Him,

“Only little knowledge is communicated to you, (O mankind!)” (Qur’an, 17:85).

It expresses the limitation of human measurements and criteria. It also expresses how little, how minute, mankind’s knowledge is.

Statements by Imam Ali (as) About the Knowledge of the Most Exalted One of Details

Commander of the Faithful Ali (as) has said, “The number of rain drops is not beyond His knowledge, nor is it the number of the stars in the sky, the particles of dust carried by the wind, the sound of ants on soft rocks, or where particles fall in the dark night. He knows where leaves fall, what visions conceal.”¹⁵

He, peace with him, has also said, “Praise belongs to Allah Who knows the dust raised by the beasts in the plains, the sins of His servants which they commit in privacy, the places where sea creatures go, and the tumultuous water stirred by storms.”¹⁶

He (as) has also said, “He knows what the chests hide, what the consciences conceal; His knowledge encompasses everything.”¹⁷

Up to this point, talk comes to an end about the positive entitative attribute that is knowledge. The following discussion covers the second attribute which is potency, that is, His being Omni-Potent, Mighty, Able, Powerful, if the most Praised One so wills.

3. Self-Affirmative Attributes

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1. The one who seeks such evidence is the French philosopher Rene Descartes.
 2. The goal behind this definition is only to point out in a way to the truth of the knowledge without observing the condition of a true definition, so it must not be criticized as requiring a role so the one who defines it may derive it in the definition.
 3. Refer to Al-Asfar, Vol. 6, p. 176. You will come to know in the next researches that His Attributes are His own Self.
 4. Murad fi Tajrid al-Itiqad تجريد الاعتقاد في كشف المراد , p. 175 and Sharh al-Qawshaji شرح القوشجي , p. 313.
 5. Al-Asfar الأسفار, Vol. 6, p. 275. Refer also in this regard to abstractions and its explanations.
 6. Sharh al-Manzouma شرح المنظومة , philosophy section, p. 164.
 7. Nahjul-Balagha, pieces of wisdom section, No. 191.
 8. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 4, p. 65.
 9. Kashf al-Murad, p. 175.
 10. Qawaid al-Maram, p. 98.
 11. Tajrid al-Itiqad, p. 176.
 12. Al-Qoshaji, Sharh al-Itiqad, p. 414.
 13. Ibid.
 14. Kashf al-Murad, p. 176.
 15. Nahjul-Balagha, sermon 178.
 16. Ibid., sermon 198.
 17. Ibid., sermon 86.

Potence

Theologians have agreed that potence, might, is one of the perfect entitative attributes similarly to knowledge. Therefore, the Omni-Potent is regarded as one of His Names, Glory to Him. 1

Potence, as far as language is concerned, as defined by lexicographers, connotes ownership, independence and plentitude. Ibn Manzour (author of the lexicon *Lisan al-Arab*) has said, “It is said that one is able to do something; he has the ability, the dominance; so he is able, capable.”

The most Praised One says,

“...in the presence of an omni-Potent Sovereign” (Qur’an, 54:55),

that is, One Who is Able, Mighty. Ability is independence and abundance.

Al-Raghib has said, “If an individual is described as being able, it is a characteristic through which he can do something. But if Allah Almighty is described by it, it is denying that there is any incapacitation in Him.” It is obvious the explanation provided by al-Raghib of the might in Allah, Praise belongs to Him, by rendering it to the negative attributes (denying incapacitation in Him), is an obvious error by him. Might is perfection, and it does not depart from His perfection.

Defining Potence

Philosophers and logicians have interpreted potence in many ways the most significant of which are the following:

1. Potence means the ability to do or not to do. The Omni-Potent is the One Who can do something, and He can abandon doing it.
2. Potence is action at will, and inaction in the absence of such a will. The Omni-Potent is the One Who, if He pleases, does something, and if He does not, He would not do it or, if He does not want, He would not do something.

The first definition implies the soundness of doing or not doing, that they both can be done by the Omni-Potent. This ability may be described as being of a “what” nature, so one may say that man, as a human, may or may not do something. As regarding the ability with readiness, it describes the ready matter, that is, it is described with attributes of perfection such as we say that a seed can become a tree.

According to both estimates, His Potence, Praise belongs to Him, cannot be explained with the use of this statement because Allah, Praise belongs to Him, is above “what” being applied to Him. Rather, He is existence all of it; so, how can we describe Him with possibilities which are among His own

manifestations? Also, He, Praise is due to Him, is above matter and “readiness”; so, how can His might be explained by something based on matter, readiness, etc.?

The second definition is seen outwardly as the doer being the creator of the deed through his will. It is conditional that the doer is not perfect in his deed except when something else is added to him, which is the “will”, something which is impossible to apply to Allah, Praise belongs to Him, Who is Independent in His doing of anything besides His own self, not even the “will” if added to Him.

Defending Both Definitions

The objective behind describing the Almighty as having Potence, Might, Ability, is to prove His perfection and goodness and to hold Him above shortcomings or defects. Had some definitions required a shortcoming or a misconception about Him, Glory to Him, it must be stripped of such requirements and must be discerned in the (light of) absolute perfection. This is not relevant to only Potence. Rather, all Attributes applied to Him, Praise belongs to Him, enjoy the same.

For example, life is the starting point for perfection and goodness, the source of feeling and knowing. The goal behind describing the most Praised One as Living is only a reference to such perfection. What we realize of life, extract from natural beings, cannot be used to describe the most Exalted One because it would require the most Praised One to be a natural existent ready for action and impression, in addition to other characteristics of material life.

For this reason, we must describe Him, Glory to Him, as life stripped of shortcomings. This is an overall restriction in all divine attributes, none of the Attributes of the most Praised One can be described through them except in this context. This is what the wise gnostic who knows Allah, Praise belongs to Him, tries to do.

It is then that the interpretation of His Might, Glory to Him, becomes accurate, according to both definitions stated above, but while stripping each of them of the shortcomings which it requires, such as the most Praised One having a “what” or a “ready” matter, as is the case in the first definition, or that the most Praised One is the doer through a will that is beyond the self, as is the case with the second definition.

Based on the above, what can be said is that the ratio of the deed to its doer cannot lack one of three divisions:

First: The doer is restricted by the deed; he cannot separate himself from his deed. Such is the compelled doer like the fire as it burns or the sun as it shines.

Second: The doer is restricted not to leave the deed. Thus, the deed would be restricting him.

Third: The doer is not restricted by one of the ratios. The deed would not be resistant until it is restricted

to abandonment, nor is the abandonment is resistant until it is restricted by the deed. The matter with regard to interpreting the potency is rendered to the doer being absolutely unrestricted by any deed or by the abandonment of it. 2

This is what we understand when He, the Praised One, is described as the Omni-Potent, whether it is interpreted as the soundness of action or inaction, or whether it is interpreted as “If He wills, He does, and if He does not will, He does not.” We derive from both definitions the perfection of His Might, leaving aside any shortcomings.

So, it is accurate to say that the Might in His regard, Praised is He, is the soundness of action and inaction, that is, He is above being restricted by action or inaction. It is also accurate to use the second definition, not in the sense His action is done through a superfluous will, but according to what you have known: His being above any restriction regarding action or inaction.

Indications of His Might

Evidences pointing out to His Might, Praise belongs to Him, are many. We are going to explain their most obvious, the strongest.

First: Instinct

Every human being finds it within himself that he is attracted towards a lofty might when calamities take place, believing that there is a Supreme Might which is the only resort for salvation during those hard times. This is what he senses without being taught, without learning. The existence of this instinct reveals the existence of such an absolute might. Otherwise, its existence would have been regarded as nonsense.

What is meant by instinct here is not having an image of the Omni-Potent when hard times reign so it may be said that imagining something is not evidence of its existence. It is like imagining the Phoenix is not regarded as evidence of its actual existence. Rather, it is the inner inclination, one's self-conscience is attracted to it, and the sense that such an attraction is similar to the rest of his senses.

One who is deeply drowned into hard times, one who has lost all hope for any material cause, finds it within the depths of his soul that there is a feeling in which he does not doubt, the feeling that there is an existent that knows about his problems, one who is capable of pushing them away from him.

There is no contradiction to his instinct if he is distracted from such existent when the hard times no longer are there, when calamities are no more, for not every instinctive matter manifests itself in all circumstances. The surfacing of instincts requires special conditions and atmospheres, including even the instincts of a carnal desire, anger, etc.

Briefly, just as instinct calls for the existence of the most Praised One, it also calls for His Attributes:

knowledge, might, etc. The most Praised One says,

“Say: ‘Think to yourselves, if God’s Wrath were to come upon you, or the Hour (that you dread)..., would you then call on someone other than Allah? (Reply) if you are truthful! Nay! You would (certainly) call upon Him, and if it is His Will, He would remove (the distress) which made you call upon Him and you would forget (the false gods) which you associate with Him’” (Qur’an, 6:40–41).

Second: Cosmic Order

The cosmic order, in all what is tiny and what is magnanimous in it, in all the goodness and glory, the precision and the magnificence, the mastership and the perfection, speaks of the might of the One Who initiated all things, of His ability to create what is the most precise and the most wonderful. Natural sciences have greatly helped in this field, proving the might of the Maker. The more perfect these sciences are, the more mankind becomes familiar with the cosmic systems, laws and wonders, and the more this attribute manifests itself in the best and most glorious way.

Thus, it becomes obvious that a doer’s deed, just as it reveals the existence of the doer, also reveals his quality. A good book of poems tells us about the existence of one who wrote it. Likewise, it tells us about his artistic ability, superb taste and capability to soar in the horizons of imagination in order to mold lofty meanings in good word templates. Both books, the one titled *Canon*, which deals with medicine, by Ibn Sina (Avicenna), and his other book titled *Al-Shifaa* (healing) in philosophy, prove that their author was among those who were genius in medicine and philosophy.

Therefore, we see that when He, the most Praised One, describes His magnificent actions and creations in the verses of His Holy Qur’an, He concludes them with the Attribute “the Omni-Potent”. He, the most Praised One, says,

“Allah is He Who created seven firmaments, and of the earth (He created) a similar number; through the midst of them (all) His command descends so you may know that Allah has might over all things, and that Allah encompasses all things in (His) knowledge” (Qur’an, 65: 12).

Precision and mastership in a deed are signs of knowledge, indications of might. We see in some statements of Imam Ali (as) how he relies in proving His might, the most Exalted One, on the magnificence of His deeds and the goodness of what He creates, the most Praised One that He is.

He (as) has said, “He initiated creations through His Might, spread the winds through His mercy and firmed with stones the field of His earth.”³

He (as) also says, “He showed us of His domain His Might and the wonders that articulate signs of His wisdom.”⁴

He (as) also says, “He straightened of things what is crooked thereof, set a system for their limits and

synchronized, through His might, their antitheses.”⁵

He (as) also says, “He established testifying evidences for things which he created with His grace, and for His great might.”⁶

And there are other such references in his sermons and statements, peace with him.

Imam Jafar ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq (as) answered a question by an atheist thus: “How could One Who has showed you His might in your own creation have veiled Himself from you?”⁷

Third: One Who Grants Perfection Does not Lack It

Among the evidences for His might, Praise belongs to Him, is that He created mankind just as He created others, giving him the ability to make what is wonderful, strange, huge and amazing things. It is known that man, through his presence and ability, is the cause behind His existence, Praise belongs to Him. So, how can One Who creates mankind and bestowed things on him be lacking in what He gives?

Dominance of the Almighty’s Might Over Everything

The human nature rules that the absolute perfection towards which mankind is sometimes attracted is capable of anything that is possible. It does not entertain minds at all, had it not been for the doubts raised by skeptics, that there are limits for His might, or that He can do something but not something else. Muslims during the first era embraced this belief which Allah’s Book inspired to them, the Book that states the generality of Allah’s might, Praise belongs to Him.

The matter of logic reached mentors of the Mutazilites who recorded details about the expanse of His might, Praise belongs to Him, to which we would like to refer by way of generality:

1. Al-Nizam⁸ has said, “The Almighty cannot do what is ugly.”
2. Abbad ibn Sulayman al-Seemari⁹ has said, “He cannot do what is the opposite of what He knows.”
3. Al-Balkhi¹⁰ has said, “He cannot do similarly to what His servants do.”
4. The two Jubaais¹¹ have said, “He cannot do exactly what His servants can.”

It may have been attributed to men of wisdom that the most Praised One *cannot* do but one thing, and that nothing comes out of Him other than a lone thing: reason. There are beliefs espoused by the dualists that are ambiguous. We shall set aside another place to explain the latter.¹²

This is a historic picture about the growth of this viewpoint, that is to say, limiting Allah’s might! It seems that most of these individuals were influenced by imported opinions that entered the Islam lands during the period of the renaissance of translation. Their misconceptions and the latter’s analyses will be

presented to you after we review the evidences of those who advocate that His might is general.

Evidences of Advocates of the Generality of Divine Might

What is meant by the “generality of His might,” Praise belongs to Him, is its absorption of anything that is possible. In others words, the Almighty can create everything that He can, nothing is impossible for Him to do. Critics have come to this conclusion based on their statements such as these:

“The requirement is present, the obstacle is missing.” The first is due to the fact that the Almighty is able through His own might. Its ratio to the whole is equal to its being above time, place and direction.

“As for the second, the requirement for something to be destined is its possibility. Possibility is common among all. So, the attribute of ability is also common among the probabilities, which is the ultimate pursuit.”

This can be explained through the following evidence.

The “obstacles” in the way of His general ability may be one of the following matters:

First: Something is not possible on its own, such as the combination of two opposites or antitheses.

Second: There may be an obstacle in the way of His will being affected and of its inclusion of everyone. That is to say, as if there is an equivalent might that contrasts and opposes His might.

Third: His own Self is not equal with regard to things.

These three factors are rejected in their entirety. As for the first, what is meant by the generality of His might is its inclusion of any matter that is possible without the existence of an innate objection. Divine Might has nothing to do with this. The Doer is not at fault; the fault is in the source.

As for the Second, the equivalent might, which opposes His, is rejected on account of what has already been proven and fixed in its place, to the unity of the One Who does things, to the lack of a similitude to Him in existence. As regarding the probable might, it does not compete with His might: It is His own creation.

As for the third, His being above any restriction, condition, direction, place, makes Him equal relatively to anything that by itself is possible. So, there is no sense that there are some things that are possible while others are not. Selectivity with regard to His might, Praise belongs to Him, is pawned to some things being close to Him rather than others similarly to man who lives in a specific place and time.

Past and future things are outside his control because he (man) is chained by time and space. As for the Absolute Abstract Who created all times and places, all essences and conditions, it does not make sense that His essence is close to one and is distant from another.

This explains that evidence.

There is something else that is more glorious and magnificent than what has been stated, and it is based on His infinitude in goodness, perfection, etc. Its outcome is that His presence, Glory to Him, is infinite, limitless. In other words, it is an absolute presence not limited by any imaginable or external limits. He is infinite in existence, infinite in perfection and goodness because the source of perfection is existence.

The absence of infinitude in the aspect of existence is inherent to its absence in the aspect of perfection. What perfection is there that is more magnificent and wonderful than the Might that is infinite due to His perfection being infinite? This proves the expanse of His Might that encompasses anything that can be.

Expanse of His Might, Glory to Him, in Another Sense

The expanse of His Might, Glory to Him, has two meanings. One of them you have already come to know. The second is submitted by men of wisdom in their books. Its conclusion is that the cosmic phenomena, what is abstract and what is material, what is innate and what they do, end up at His Might, Praise belongs to Him.

Just since there is no partner with Him in His essence, there is no partner with Him in His actions. Anything for which the word “existent” is used is directly created by Allah, Praise belongs to Him, or through causes and effects. Everyone relies on Him, there is no avoiding it. This is the uniqueness of the Creator that we will explain when we discuss the negative attributes.

Those who oppose this meaning of expanse of Might are the dualists who have made a doer for goodness as being different from the doer of evil and all Mutazilites who made man an independent doer in his actions. By His leave, the most Exalted One, we will explain this in its place and how both of these doctrines are wrong.¹³

As regarding the statement of wise men, that is, what comes out of Allah, Praise belongs to Him, is first reason from which the second reason was issued, up to the end of the circle of existence at the matter and the hyle¹⁴, apparently it is purely hypothetical and is not different from all existents ending at Allah, Praise belongs to Him, through causes and effects, and the details are in their proper place.

Religious Texts and the Expanse of His Might, Glory to Him

Texts from the Quran and Sunnah have supported each other with regard to the expanse of His Might and its absolution. We would like to quote some of them here:

The most Praised One says,

“...And Allah has might over all things” (Qur’an, 33:27).

He has also said,

“Allah (alone) prevails over all things” (Qur’an, 18:45).

He has also said,

“...Nor is Allah to be frustrated by anything whatever in the heavens or on earth, for He is all-Knowing, all-Mighty” (Qur’an, 35:44).

Imam al-Sadiq (as) has said, “All things are with him alike with regard to His knowledge, potence, authority and might (over them).”¹⁵

Imam Mousa ibn Jafar (as) has said, “He is the Omni-Potent Who is never incapable.”¹⁶

Questions and Answers

Those who advocate the generality of His Might, Glory to Him, have been faced by several questions which we are going to submit then analyze. These questions are:

1. “Can the most Praised One create His likeness?” If this question is answered in the affirmative, it will require the hypothesis that there will thus be a partner with Him, Glory to Him. And if it is answered in the negative, it will prove that His might is limited, not general.
2. “Is He capable of making the wide world fit into an egg without the world’s size being minimized or the egg maximized?” If it is answered in the affirmative, it will require the opposite of what is necessary, that is, the thing to be contained is greater than the container. If it is answered in the negative, it will indicate that His might is not general.
3. “Can He, Praise belongs to Him, create something to which He cannot put an end?” If it is answered in the affirmative, it will then indicate that His might is not broad, since He cannot put an end to something. And if it is answered in the negative, it will necessitate the non-generality of His might. The answer to a question such as this, be it positive or negative, will indicate the limitation of His might.

These are the questions. As regarding answering them, this is done once through generalization and once through details.

As regarding generalizing, the claim is that His might is relevant to what can be done by the Self. The contexts of these questions are not matters that are innately possible. Rather, they all are either impossible by themselves or something that requires such impossibility. The inability to undertake them is not regarded as an indication of a shortcoming in the doer. If a tailor cannot make a shirt out of bricks, and if the painter cannot paint a painting of a peacock on water, it is not regarded as a defect in the ability of either.

This is similar to our asking a skilled mathematician to let the result of 2×2 be five. On this basis, the question is not restricted to what is stated; rather, anything that is not possible by itself does not fall within the frame of might because this thing itself is faulty, whereas the might is not.

As regarding the detailed answer for these three questions, here is its explanation for you.

As regarding the first, demanding someone to create someone else similar to him is impossible to fit within the frame of one's ability, and to demand it is to demand what is impossible.

In other words, creating a peer requires the combination of two opposites in one and the same thing. Since the hypothesis supposes the existence of someone similar to Him, Glory to Him, this becomes a must, not a probability, something timeless (that has already taken place) rather than incidental, unlimited, not limited.

Since might is attached to him, which is not attached to something which is non-existent, it must be incidental rather than timeless, probable rather than a must, infinite rather than finite. This is what we have said, that is, it requires the existence of two antitheses in one and the same thing.

Thus, the answer to the second question becomes obvious. The might being independent of making the big thing fit into the small thing is not from the standpoint of its being improbable by itself. Commonsense rules that the container must be greater than what it contains. This is on the one hand. On the other hand, making a big thing fit in a small container requires the doing of its opposite: the container is smaller than what it contains. Attempting to do such a thing requires doing one thing, the container or what it contains, being small and the same time big.

As regarding the third question, the supposition is impossible because it requires an impossibility by itself. Supposing the most Praised One is incapable of creating a thing which He Himself had created is not separate from impossibility, and here is an explanation for it.

Since the indicated thing is doable, it is (likewise) perishable. Since it is preconditioned to non-extinction, such condition is not possible. The issue becomes one thing being probable and a must, perishable and non-perishable, all at the same time.

In other words, its being created hinges on the ability of putting an end to it because what is made is sustained by its Maker. If the tie with the latter is severed, it will require its becoming non-existent. Its being non-perishable requires its being not created in the first place. What the question presupposes, if at all, is the presence of two antitheses.

Thus, the answers to questions similar to these become possible such as one may ask: Can Allah create a body which He cannot cause to move? This falls into the category of combining two opposites. The supposition that its having a beginning necessitates its having an end, that it can be mobilized. Yet, at the same time, we claimed that the most Praised One is supposedly unable to mobilize it!

These hypotheses and their likes do not harm the generality of His might. Rather, they only fool simple-minded people. As for people of distinction and perfection, they are greater than being ignorant of how to respond to them.

Misconceptions of Those Who Deny Might's Generality

You have come to know some details about this issue in the beginning of the research. It is now time to look deeply into it and analyze it in a way that suits the condition of this book.

Allah, Glory to Him, "Cannot" Do What is Ugly

Al-Nizami seeks to argue that the Almighty cannot do what is ugly, that had He been able to do it, He would have. Thus, He would be either ignorant of its ugliness or is in need for so doing, and both matters are impossible.

The answer to it is clear. What is meant by His ability to do something ugly is that such an ability is the same, whether in doing what is ugly or in doing what is good. Just as He is able to send one who obeys Him to Paradise, He likewise is able to send him to hell. The issue here is not what "incapacitates" Him from doing it. Since this action violates His wisdom, Glory to Him, His justice and equity, He does not do it. An ugly deed is committed by a doer who is either ignorant of its ugliness or he is in need of doing it.

Both matters are not present with His sanctity. A big difference exists between the inability to do something in the first place and not actually doing it simply because there is no need to do it. A kind father can slaughter his son, but the motive to doing such a thing does not exist with him. Such an action is not done except by an ignorant wretch or someone who [for some reason] needs to commit it.

A Nizami individual has confused "inability" with the absence of a motive.

Almighty's "Inability" To Do the Opposite of What He Knows

Abbad ibn Sulayman al-Seemari claims that His might is not broad. He says that if Allah knows that something will take place, it definitely will, so its taking place is a must. What He knows that it will not take place does not at all take place, so it is prohibited from taking place. What is a must, or what cannot be, has nothing to do with might, since might is relevant to something which may take place or which may not. The thing, according to this man's knowledge, which is unilateral, having one definite status, does not fall within the scope of might.

Example: If He, the most Praised and Exalted One, knows that a man will be born in a certain period of time, that man's presence in that period will be definite and known. So, His might is not relevant to its not taking place, which is the opposite of what He knows. This is so because the supposition is that this man's presence became a must, while his non-presence became impossible, since His knowledge reveals the reality completely.

There are two ways to respond to this argument. First, the requirement of what he states is that His might is not relevant to a thing in the first place. This is so because a thing may either be known in His knowledge, the most Praised One, as being coming into reality, or He may know that it will not come to exist. The first must come to be, whereas the second will not. Everything enters into one of these two frames. This requires that His might must not be described as depending on anything at all. The theory is false, that is for sure.

Second, this son of Abbad did not make a distinction between what by itself is a must and what can be so by someone else. He also did not differentiate between what by itself is impossible to come to be and one which is made impossible to be by someone else. The objection to might being attached to something is the innate presence or non-presence, not the existence and non-existence as a result of others being attached to a thing coming into existence or not.

Explanation: Anything relevant to might must by itself be possible and in which the ratio of existence and non-existence is the same. Its existence probability, when the cause is present, does not get it out of possibility. Also, its being non-existent, in the absence of a cause, does not get it out of that limit either.

Therefore, His knowledge, though ranging between causing existence or non-existence, i.e. the necessity of existence compared to the presence of its cause, and the necessity of non-existence relevant to the absence of its cause, this necessity at both ends does not make a thing a must by itself or the contrary. Rather, even after the attachment of necessity or its absence, with regard to the existence or non-existence of its cause, is described through possibility, it does not depart from the limit of straight-forwardness.

In the supposed example, I mean the birth of someone at a particular time, it is relevant to His knowledge and will, Praise belongs to Him, that dominates His creation in that circumstance, and the opposite does not take place. But if it does not take place, it is not due to His being unable to cause it to happen.

Rather, it falls in the expanse of His knowledge, Praise belongs to Him, whether He creates or does not create. Rather, it is due to being the opposite of what He knows and wants. A big difference exists between not doing something (not creating a particular thing/person) because it is the opposite of what He knows to be good and His inability to do it.

His “Inability” to Do Similarly to What His Servants Do

Al-Balkhi went as far as suggesting that Allah Almighty “cannot” do similarly to what His servants can, because it is either obedience to Him or disobedience or foolhardiness. Man’s actions cannot depart from these three categories, and they are all impossible to apply to the most Exalted One. Otherwise, His actions would have been categorized as obedience, disobedience or foolhardiness.

The first two require that there should be someone who orders Allah Almighty, which is impossible. The

last enters under the category of ugliness, which is (also) impossible to apply to Him, Praise belongs to Him. An answer has been provided about His “inability” to do what is ugly, so there is no need for repetition. As for the first two, we would like to say the following:

Obedience and disobedience are not among the true matters that stand by a thing itself. Rather, they are two matters which reason comprehends when comparing the action of the ordered one with his violation of it. It is then that we find no confusion about His ability, Glory to Him, to do similarly to what His servant does by way of similarity, such as His action, Praise belongs to Him, being united in essence and form with the deed and form of His servant.

As regarding His action, Praise belongs to Him, not being described as obedience or disobedience, in this case, it does not harm His ability, the most Exalted One, to do similarly to what man does because the criterion in similarity is the reality of the action, its outer truth, not the labels, be they symbolic or extractive, which do not affect the reality of the thing.

In support of what we have stated, *allama* al-Hilli says the following as he explains abstraction: “Obedience and foolhardiness are two characteristics which do not require the variation of the essence.”¹⁷ Let us suppose that someone built a house in obedience of an order he received from his boss. Allah, Praise belongs to Him, can create the likeness of that house without a difference from it as much as one hair.

While the servant’s action is characterized as obedience, His action, Praise belongs to Him, is not. But this does not cause an essential difference between both actions; rather, both actions are united in essence and in form.

Yes, there are actions made by man directly. They stand through him similarly to an explanation provided for a topic, such as eating and drinking. Their being not done by Allah, Praise belongs to Him, is due to their being among the material actions that stand by the material topic, and Allah, Praise belongs to Him, is above matter, so He is not characterized by these actions.

Nevertheless, man and his direct actions are all due to His assistance, Praise belongs to Him, to His might and means, so much so that if the outpouring from the Lord stops, man and his actions would all become things of the past.

The Almighty’s “Inability” to Do Exactly What His Servant Does

Both Jubais have concluded that there is an absence of the expanse of His ability, Glory to Him, just as others have, as we indicated above, but they provide a different explanation. They say that the Almighty *cannot* do exactly what His servant does. Otherwise, there would have been a requirement for both antitheses to be present if Allah wills something while His servant abhors it, or vice versa.

An explanation of inherence: What is decreed will come to pass on the call of the One Who can make it

happen, and it stays in the world of nonexistence where it is kept from happening. Had there been two decrees actualized by two able ones, and if we suppose that one of them has a reason to bring it into being while the other, at the same time, does not have such a reason, this will require looking into that cause. It remains in the world of nonexistence in as far as the one that does not want it to come into being is concerned. Hence, it becomes existent and nonexistent; such are contradictions.

The answer is as follows.

First: Nonexistence is not relevant to only the way mentioned by both Jubais, i.e. the one in which one of them (the able person) has a cause to bring it into being, whereas the other keeps it from happening in the world of nonexistence. Rather, the prevention (from it coming into existence) takes place if the will of each one of them is relevant to bringing into being the same decree, its exactness. This would require two complete causes combined for the sake of one effect.

Second: His (supposed) “inability” to do exactly what His servant does is due to the fact that it is relevant to what can be done through possible means. If it becomes impossible, might is not relevant to it. Its dissociation from what is impossible does not at all mean that it is limited.

The images supposed by both Jubais, or what we have added to them, do not prove anything more than an action coming up under those circumstances being impossible. This is so because it requires the combination of two antitheses, according to the supposition of the two Jubais, or on the combination of two perfect causes into one effect, according to our own supposition, which is impossible and out of the frame of might; it is not even labeled as inability.

Third: What do both men mean when they say, “exactly what the servant of Allah can do”? Do they mean the thing before its existence, or do they mean after its existence? If they mean the first, there is no specificity here, there is no particular circumstance. The thing in this phase does not go beyond being a totally inclusive concept. If they mean the second probability, the fact that might is not attached to it due to being the likeness of bringing about what is already doing so, which is impossible, and what is impossible is outside the framework of might.

Fourth: The reference they both (Jubais) stated about the will of the servant of Allah hinging on first creating him, whereas the will of the most Praised One hinges on its opposite, is a concept of dualists which found its way to Islamic circles. It depicts the action of a servant as his (own) creation rather than being a creation of Allah, Glory to Him, through causation, and that there are two independent doers (Allah and His servant). Each of these doers has his own particular sphere. In this case, the will of the servant is not attached to the will of Allah, Glory to Him, through any means.

But this is false, as we will explain when we discuss the Unity of Allah in His creation. Every doer, be it a doer out of his own self-will or not, does not do anything except when the most Praised One enables him through His own will. If a servant wants something, he does so through the will of Allah and His might in a way which does not require coercion or out of a need, as we will explain with the permission

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1. The difference between an adjective and a name is that the first is not understood as a subject: Nobody would say, “Zaid came to know.” This is the opposite of the second: It is dealt with as such, so it is said, “Zaid knows” (or he is a man of knowledge). Hence, this [rule] is applied when dealing with His Names and Attributes, Glory to Him. Knowledge, potence and life are [linguistically, according to Arabic] adjectives, while “the all-Knowing”, the “Omni-Potent” and the “Living” are His Names, the most Exalted One.
 2. Thus, you have come to know that describing Him, the most Praised One, as being the Omni-Potent, which means stripping Him of being restricted by either side, is in synch with describing how the option is all His, Praise to Him, and you will come to know its discussion later if the Praised One so permits.
 3. Nahjul-Balagha, Sermon 1.
 4. Ibid., Sermon of Images No. 91.
 5. Ibid.
 6. Nahjul-Balagha, Sermon 165.
 7. Al-Saduq, Al-Tawhid, p. 91.
 8. His name is Ibrahim ibn Sayyar ibn Hani al-Nizam. He died in 231 A.H./853 A.D. The century in which he lived was rich with foreign translations of opinions that were imported into Islamic lands. It is thought that he was influenced by those views and ideologies.
 9. He is quoted as having said that the evidence of pronouncements is self entitative, not created. We could not find his biography in lexicons. Allama al-Hilla mentioned his theory about the might of the Almighty, Praise to Him, in his book titled Nahjul-Mustarshidin. Refer to Irshad al-Talibin ila Nahj al-Mustarshidin, p. 189.
 10. His name is “Abul-Qasim” al-Kabi, and he died in 317 A.H./929 A.D.
 11. They are: Sheikh “Abu Ali” Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhab who died in 303 A.H./916 A.D. and his son, “Abu Hashim”, Abdul-Salam ibn Muhammad, who died in 321 A.H./933 A.D. Both were among heads and pillars of the Mutazilites, and they have opinions which contradict those of all their mentors.
 12. The discussion of the beliefs of dualists will be stated in the chapter on Tawhid in [the subject of] creation.
 13. We will state how the doctrine of the dualists is wrong when we discuss the Oneness of Creator and the falsehood of the Mutazilites’ claim when we discuss determinism and empowerment.
 14. For the full meaning of this word, refer to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED). –Tr.
 15. Al-Saduq, Al-Tawhid, pp 76, 131.
 16. Ibid.
 17. Al-Hilli, Kashf al-Murad, p. 174 (Said edition).

Life

Scholars of divinities have agreed that life is one of His Attributes, and that “al-Hayy”, the Living, is one of His Names, the most Praised One. But applying this name to Him, Glory to Him, depends on how much one understands this “life”, and how it can be applied to the One Who brought forth existence.

We say that undoubtedly, every human being makes a distinction between the living existent and the non-living (dead) existent, realizing that life is the opposite of death. Yet, despite this general

knowledge, nobody can realize the truth about life in living existents.

Life is the most obvious of conditions, yet it is the most difficult to comprehend, the most complex to define.

For this reason, scholars' opinions about explaining its reality have differed, and they have gone sundry ways. Yet according to the opinion of sciences of nature, the following conditions are part of what they describe:

1. Attracting and Thrusting
2. Growing and Maturing
3. Reproducing and Multiplying
4. Acting and Reacting

This definition of life points out to life's effects, it does not explain its reality. These are effects shared by living members. Despite all of this, we see the vast distance between plant life and human life. The living plant includes the above-stated four characteristics, but life in animals adds to them sense and feeling, and this additional perfection, which is represented in sensing and feeling, does not make animals a testimony that differs from life. Rather, it renders it a more perfecting testimony for it.

Also, there is a life that is higher and more honorable which is: In addition to the five characteristics, the living being has the attribute of the sense of knowledge, reason and logic.¹ Thereupon, the four characteristics make up a measure common among all levels of nature even though each level has its own qualities that distinguish it from others.

It must be known that naturalists have stated this definition. They were satisfied with it because they had no goal other than pointing out to the life that falls within the scope of their researches. As for the life that exists outside the world of nature, it was not submitted to them as they were busy researching nature.

Defining Life in Another Way

Undoubtedly, plant life is different from animal life. So are all high levels of life. But this does not render this word, life, a common term having multiple meanings. Rather, it is a common immaterial term applied in one meaning to all levels but through the process of development and completion.

Let us explain the above by saying that material life in plants, animals and humans, since the latter are animals, too, undertakes two functions.

First: Action and impression, influencing and being influenced, up to the end of the list that targets the four characteristics mentioned by naturalists, as we have explained. We can apply the term "activity" to

this characteristic.

Second: Sense and realization lie in the simple meaning they convey. There is no doubt that it applies to all sorts of natural life, including plants. Naturalists have discovered the existence of sense in plants in general, and that primitive man knew about its existence in some of them, such as date trees and others. It is to this matter that we use the term “realization”.

The result is that what straightens life in nature, in its different levels, is activity and realization in their various degrees and complementing levels, and that it is not right to apply the term “life” to plants and animals except through development. This is due to the vast distance between both norms of life. What is absolutely correct to use in one sense is the process of development through eliminating shortcomings and impurities that are present in both plants and animals.

On this basis, it is accurate to use the term “life” to humans as humans, not as animals. The correction to the use of this term is the development process on which (life) stands. Otherwise, how can human life be measured by a lower type of life? Where is the action expected of rational life in man compared to the action of botanical and animal life? How can you compare man’s realization of whole matters and mathematical laws with the sense of plants and the feeling of animals?

Yet despite this vast distance between both lives, we find ourselves describing life as life, applying the term “living” in the same sense to all of them. The one and the same meaning is only due to the existent being “active” and “realizing,” but his action and realization suit every level of life.

Briefly, the criterion for natural life is action and realization, and it is preserved in all levels but is continuously developing and perfecting. If it is right to use the term “life” in the same sense to all these various degrees, let it be right to apply to supreme living existents but in a perfect way.

Allah, Praise belongs to Him, is Living in the sense this word conveys, but it is “life” that suits His most supreme status by eliminating what is added or deleted, by taking the pith, the essence, the in-depth meaning. He, Praise belongs to Him, is Living in the sense He is a doer, He realizes. If you will, you can say that He is “effective”, and you can say that He “realizes” but not similarly to the way possible existents realize.

Example for Depicting Development in the Absolute

What we have stated about the reality of life, that after observing its levels, reason extracts a broad concept that applies to all of its forms, this is broadly applied. For example, the word “lamp” used to be used in the beginning to the burning twig, but it developed according to the development of civilization and sophistication, so it now is used to anything that is burnt by oil, gasoline, natural gas, and electricity, all in one and the same sense.

This is so because of the fact that such generalization is sound. The thing is evident by itself, showing

itself to others, lighting what is around it. This reality, despite the difference in its levels, exists in all testimonies, and in the electrical lamp, in the most perfect way.

It is an illusion to explain the life of the Initiator of Life through the life that sees sense in plants, animals and man. It is also an illusion to imagine that His life is dependent on an action, a chemical or a physical reaction, etc. All these do not enter into the reality of life, although they have something to do with realizing some of its levels. Without these chemical or physical actions, life would become impossible in natural existents. But its existence in a particular level is not at all regarded as evidence in its impact on its reality.

Also, the lamp burning through the wick in many of its sections is not regarded as an evidence of the lamp's reality although it is so with regard to some of its parts. We will then come up with this conclusion: What maintains life is that the Existent is knowledgeable, a doer, realizing and affecting, impacting and making others feel His impact, or you may express it however you please.

Evidence of His Being Living, Praise Belongs to Him

I do not think that you need, in order to describe Him as Living, evidence after you become familiar with two matters.

First: It has been proven with evidence that He, Praise belongs to Him, is Knowledgeable, Able, and this has already been discussed.

Second: The truth of life in supreme degrees is not beyond the One characterized by it who realizes, affects, knows and influences.

If these two matters are realized, the absolute result is that since He, Praise belongs to Him, is Knowledgeable, Able, realizes, effective, due to the fact that knowledge is inseparable from realization, and ability is inseparable from action, they are the same life during its development through the elimination of what is superfluous. For this reason, we see that men of wisdom derive evidence about His life by saying, "The Almighty is Living because it is impossible to say that someone is able and knowledgeable but is not living!"²

In fact, His life, Praise belongs to Him, is His being characterized by ability and knowledge, and you will come to know that all His Attributes, Praise belongs to Him, though they are different in their concepts, unite in being factual, providing evidence.

Add to the above the fact He, Praise belongs to Him, created living existents that realize and are effective; so, it is impossible for One Who grants perfection to be without perfection.

His Being Living in the Quran and Sunnah

Allah Almighty describes Himself in the Holy Quran as being living a life for which there is no death saying,

“...And put your trust in Him Who lives and does not die, and celebrate His praise” (Qur’an, 25:58).

The term “living” (*al-Hayy*) occurs in the Holy Quran as one of His Names five times. The most Exalted and Great says,

“Allah! There is no god but He, the Living, the self-Subsisting, the Eternal. Neither slumber can seize Him nor sleep” (Qur’an, 2:255).

Imam Muhammad son of Ali al-Baqir, peace with both of them, has said, “Allah, Blessed and Exalted is He, was and there was nothing there with Him at all, a light in which there is no darkness, a truth in which there is no falsehood, knowledgeable who does not know ignorance, living who never dies, and so is He now, and so will He be forever.”³

Imam Mousa son of Jafar, peace with them both, has said, “Allah, the one and only god, is always Living without ‘how’, a Living God without ‘incidental life’; rather, He is Living on His own.”⁴

So, like the rest of His attributes of perfection, His being Living is a must attribute not reached by nil, nor does it know depletion and termination, because these things collide with its being a must, a necessity, and they do not suit its status; what is pre-supposed is the opposite thereof.

1. This scientific, logical and rational realization is a development of the sense that exists in animal life.

2. Allama al-Hilli, *Kashf al-Fawa'id fi Sharh Qawaid al-Aqaid*, p. 46.

3. Al-Saduq, *Tawhid*, p. 141.

4. *Ibid.*

Hearing and Seeing

One of the Attributes of the Praised One is hearing and seeing, and among His Names are: the Hearing, the Seeing. These two descriptions exist in the true Islamic Sharia. Describing the most Praised One as being Hearing and Seeing in the Quran and Sunnah is *mutawatir*, consecutively reported. But there have been differences in the reality of both of these descriptions according to statements the most significant

of which are the following.

1. His (attributes of) hearing and vision, Praise belongs to Him, are not different from our describing Him as having knowledge. Rather, they are among the branches of His knowledge of what is heard and seen. Due to His knowledge of both of them, He is said to be Hearing, Seeing.

2. Both descriptions are senses-related that are different from the absolute comprehension of knowledge, but they are proper nouns that are relevant to what is beyond His absolute knowledge without a plurality of the self or a requirement for embodiment. This is so because He knows everything/every-one that hears and sees. Being aware of what can be heard is hearing, seeing what can be seen is vision, yet this is different from His absolute knowledge of general things that are not heard and not seen. 1

If you become familiar with the statements, let us indicate an introduction here.

Hearing in the case of man takes place through natural equipment and tools. Voice waves reach the head, and from there to the material brain, then one realizes it.

Yet there must be an emphasis on something interesting here. Is the presence of these material tools a requirement for achieving vision and hearing in a special status such as for animal or man, or is it an intruder into their reality in the general sense? There is no doubt that these equipment and tools, which science explains in its own way, are only particularities relevant to material man who cannot hear or see without them.

If we suppose there is an existent that reaches the same thing which man reaches without these tools, it would be more appropriate for him to be hearing and seeing because the goal anticipated from hearing and seeing is the arrival of the waves and images at the one that realizes them. Had the waves and images been present with an existent without a physical or chemical action, he, too, would be hearing and seeing because the goal is reached in a more perfect and in a higher way.

When researching the levels of His knowledge, it is proven that all worlds are present with Him, Praise belongs to Him. All things, what is heard and seen in particular, are absolutely His own actions and, at the same time, His own knowledge, the most Exalted One that He is. The world, in all its essences and manifestations, is present with Him. Thereupon, His knowledge of what is heard suffices to describe Him as Hearing. Likewise, His knowledge of what is seen suffices to describe Him as Seeing.

Yes, it is true, His knowledge of what is heard or seen is not the same like His knowledge, Praise belongs to Him, of totalities. Thus do you become familiar with the difference between the first statement and the second.

Answering a Question

If the presence of what is heard and seen with Him, Praise belongs to Him, serves as correctly describing Him as Hearing and Seeing, can this by itself be correctly describe Him as having the ability to touch, taste, smell?

The answer to this question is clear after we become familiar with the fact that His Names, Praise belongs to Him, are subject to one's own *ijtihad*. This is so because what is smelled, tasted, touched, etc. are all present with Him, Praise belongs to Him, similarly to the presence of what is heard and seen. Since He is the Living, the self-Sustaining, i.e. the One Who needs nothing/nobody to sustain Him, while He sustains others, what can be existent, in all its levels, stands through Him, Praise belongs to Him.

Thereupon, there is no difference in as far as labeling something as belonging to Him or describing a statement as being correct. But, since it is said that His Names, the most Exalted One, hinge on closing the door of all this commotion and hoopla in defining Him, Praise belongs to Him, it is absolutely wrong to apply touching, tasting, smelling, etc. to Him.

“The Hearing” and “The Seeing” in the Quran and Sunnah

He, the most Praised One, has described Himself as being the Hearing, the Seeing. The first is repeated 41 times and the second is repeated 42 times in the Holy Quran.

Among the objectives to which the Holy Quran guides us by way of His being described by these two names is to acquaint man with the fact that His Lord is all-Hearing; He hears whatever speech man utters; He sees whatever actions he does, so He will one Day hold him accountable for what He heard and saw. The most Praised One says,

“And in your oaths, do not make God’s (name) an excuse for not doing good or acting rightly or making peace among others, for Allah is the all-Hearing, all-Knowing” (Qur’an, 2:224);

“Then fight in the cause of Allah and be informed that Allah hears and knows all things” (Qur’an, 2:244);

“And He is with you wherever you may be. And Allah sees well all that you do” (Qur’an, 57:4),

and

“Allah (always) hears the arguments between both sides among you, for Allah hears and sees (all things)” (Qur’an, 58: 1).

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib, peace with him, has said, “And He is the Seeing but not through the distinguishing of a tool, the Witness but not through coming in contact with things.”²

He, peace with him, has also said, “One who speaks hears his articulation, and one who remains silent knows what he conceals.”³

Imam Ali ibn Mousa al-Ridha, peace with him, has said, “Allah is and has always been, the most Exalted One, Able, Living, Timeless, Hearing and Seeing.”⁴

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq, peace with him, has said, “He, the most Exalted One, is Hearing and Seeing. He hears without a faculty, sees without a tool. Rather, He hears by Himself, sees by Himself.”⁵

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir, peace with him, has said, “He is Hearing, Seeing; He hears through what He sees, sees through what He hears.”⁶

The previous tradition points out to the unity of His Attributes, Praise belongs to Him, with His own Self, and the unity of each with the other in the position of the Self. The fact of hearing in Himself, Praise belongs to Him, is not different from the fact of seeing. Rather, He hears through what He sees, sees through what He hears. His essence is all hearing and seeing.

1. Al-Asfar, Vol. 6, pp. 421-23.

2. Nahjul-Balagha, Sermon 155.

3. Ibid., Sermon 182.

4. Al-Saduq, Tawhid, pp. 140, 144.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

Realization

Some scholars of logic have counted “realization” among His Attributes, and the One Who realizes, in the verb form, as being one of His Names based on this verse:

“No vision can grasp Him, but His grasp encompasses all vision: He is above all comprehension, yet He is acquainted with all things” (Qur’an, 6: 103).

There is no doubt that the most Praised One, due to the previous sacred verse, realizes, but the question whether realization is a description of knowledge of totalities and particularities, or whether it is the equivalent and synonym of knowledge, or whether it is special knowledge, the knowledge of existents, of certain particularities, His realization, Praise belongs to Him, is witnessing external things and His full knowledge of them.

Allama Tabatabai says that the terms used in the Holy Quran in reference to the types of realization are numerous. They may be twenty such as knowledge, thinking, expectation, feeling, remembrance, Gnosticism, comprehension, *fiqh*, full knowledge, certitude, ideology, opinion, claim, memory, wisdom, experience, testimony and reason. Add to what is said verdicts and insights.

The meanings of these terms are not without intricacies of matter, movement, change, save five of them: knowledge, memorization, wisdom, experience and testimony. Because they do not require shortcoming and loss, they have been used about Him, Glory to Him. The most Exalted One has said,

“And Allah has knowledge of all things” (Qur’an, 4:176);

“... And your Lord watches over all things” (Qur’an, 34:21);

“He (Allah) is indeed full of knowledge and wisdom” (Qur’an, 12:83)

and

“Is it not enough that your Lord witnesses all things?” (Qur’an, 41:53).

Thus, it becomes obvious that His realization, Praise belongs to Him, is not something beyond what these verses indicate and which describe Him as knowledgeable, safeguarding, fully ware, wise and a witness. The closest is the latter, i.e. His being the witness, for His witnessing of existents, of their presence with Him, their being sustained by Him is the same literal sense of the Name: It means He realizes matters.

“No vision can grasp Him, but His grasp encompasses all vision: He is above all comprehension, yet He is acquainted with all things” (Qur’an, 6:103).

Freewill

Freewill is one of His characteristics/attributes, Glory to Him, and is one of the meanings of His Names, there is no doubt among the theologians at all about it. But they have differed about the reality of His freewill, the most Exalted One that He is. Therefore, we have to delve into two situations:

One: We must review the opinions submitted about explaining freewill in the absolute sense.

Second: We must explain the distinctions of the Divine Freewill.

What is the Reality of Freewill?

One being willing or unwilling reflects two psychological statuses, as is the case with all psychological statuses which man finds by himself without any intermediary like pleasure, pain, and such feelings. But the goal is to analyze this sentimental matter scientifically and coin it also scientifically. Here are the views submitted in this regard:

A. The Mutazilites have explained freewill to be the “belief in benefiting” and hating as “belief in harm,” saying that the ratio of the ability at both ends of the action and inaction is even. If the belief of benefiting happens in one of the ends, it is preferred and the doer becomes effective in its regard. One can notice that this explanation is quite incomplete. The mere belief of benefit is not the start of an effect, of an action, for quite often one’s belief in benefit exists in many actions, yet he does not want those actions. He may believe in its existence in them. Actually, he believes in the presence of harm, yet he seeks it in agreement with some carnal forces.

B. Another group has interpreted freewill as a psychological yearning that takes place in man after he believes in its benefit. One can notice that explaining the will to mean yearning is quite deficient, for there may be a will, but there is no yearning, as is the case when one takes bitter medicines for treatment. Confirmed yearning may be realized, yet there is no freewill that creates the deed, as is the case with a pious man facing prohibitions and banned inclinations. For this reason, the ratio is between the freewill and yearning in general.

C. Freewill is a psychological status that intervenes between positive knowledge and action, and it is described once as objective and as a determination, and once as resolve and a decision. This is not the objective behind yearning in both its sections, what is confirmed and what is not. Also, this cannot apply to knowledge despite its presence in the individual, as is the case with all other methodologies.

In short, the truth of the freewill is “an objective, a sure inclination towards carrying out a deed.”

These are some various explanations of the reality of the freewill, and there are other theories that we have preferred to ignore.

At any rate, the Divine Freewill cannot be explained through the use of any of the above. As for the first, you have already come to know that explaining freewill as belief in a benefit requires the denial of the absolute freewill in the possible existents in addition to Allah, Glory to Him. This is so because they are rendered to knowledge of a benefit, although we find in ourselves something beyond knowledge and belief in a benefit.

One who advocates this theory proves science while denying freewill. If it is wrong to interpret freewill as belief in something beneficial in possible existents, it will likewise be wrong to interpret His freewill, the most Praised One, too. You will come to know that one who explains the freewill of Allah, Praised is He,

as being knowledge of what is the best, is influenced by this explanation. But he substitutes knowledge of what is apparently beneficial to the individual with knowledge of what is the best which suits His status, Praise belongs to Him, which aims at looking after the interests of His servants, so consider.

As regarding the second explanation, I mean eagerness or anxiety, the sure yearning, had it been applicable to man, it would have been non-applicable to Allah, Glory to Him, because He, the most Praised One, is above sentimental yearning, anxiety. Yearning for something is the doing of a doer who is deficient and who wants to come out of his deficiency towards perfection, so he definitely yearns for something.

As regarding the third explanation, whether it is explained as an objective and determination, or resolve and decision-making, its reality is something that comes into existence after having been non-existent. In this sense, it is impossible for it to describe Him because doing so requires His being subject to eventualities.¹

Since these definitions do not fit Him, Praise belongs to Him, the theologians have been divided into two groups: One group tries to make them among the attributes of the self but in a different meaning. The other group makes them attributes of an action, concluding that the freewill, such as creating, sustaining, etc., are derived from His action, Praise belongs to Him, from the impacts of His might. This group has relieved itself of the burden of confusion about their being self-attributes. Let us now talk about the theories of both of these groups.

Explaining Particularity of Divine Freewill

Since freewill in the previously stated meanings does not suit Him, Praise belongs to Him, while, on the other hand, freewill and the doer comprise a willing one, in contrast to being non-willing, is His perfection, whereas its absence is a shortcoming. Men of wisdom and critics have tried to describe Him, Praise belongs to Him, in a meaning that properly suits Him, and here is an explanation of this attempt in a different way:

His Freewill, Praise Belongs to Him, is His Knowledge of the Best System.

His freewill, Praise belongs to Him, is His knowledge of the most suitable, the most perfect and the most complete system. They have explained it through the above descriptions because they fled away from describing the most Praised One by something that is incidental and sequential, descriptions that require action and sentiment, as is the case with the human freewill.

Mulla Sadra has said, “The meaning of His having a freewill is that He, Praise to Him, is wise, knowing the system of goodness that is present everywhere through Him, and how each system came to be. System is undoubtedly present and overwhelming.”²

He has also said, “His freewill, Praise belongs to Him, by itself is His knowledge of the most perfect

system; He Himself is the One Who bids (and forbids) while nobody else does.”³

The critic al-Tusi has said, “His freewill, Praise belongs to Him, is the knowledge of the system of everything in the most perfect way. If ability and knowledge are the same thing, requiring the existence of what is likely to exist according to the most perfect system, ability, knowledge and freewill would be the same thing in His Essence, varying according to rational considerations.”⁴

Discussing Theory

Undoubtedly, the most Praised One knows by Himself, is knowledgeable of the most perfect, complete and suitable system. But to interpret His freewill reverts to denying the freewill reality in Him, Praise belongs to Him. Denying it, when it comes to (discussing) Him, leads to denying His perfection.

There is no doubt that a willing doer is more perfect than a doer who is motivated by his own desire. If we interpret His freewill, Praise belongs to Him, as being His knowledge of the system (of all systems), we will have denied His perfection and identified Him as a doer similar to one who is obligated to do what he does. Thus, looking into the statement by al-Tusi the critic, we see that he imagined that ability and knowledge are one and the same when applied to Him while being different according to rational considerations.

Due to the inaccuracy of this explanation, we see that the Imams from among the Ahl al-Bayt, peace with them, deny interpreting it as being knowledge. Bukair ibn Ayan has said, “I said to Abu Abdullah al-Sadiq (as), ‘Are His knowledge and freewill different from each other or are they the same?’ He (as) said, ‘Knowledge is not freewill. Do you not see how you say that you will do something *if* Allah wills, whereas you do not say that you will do it *IF* Allah *knows*?!’”⁵

If you will, you can say that freewill is a characteristic applied to one of two options: doing or not doing something. This applies to all times, all aspects of an action, whether it is to be done or not. So, it is not the same as freewill that opts for one, treating ability as being equally applicable to both options.

As regarding knowledge, it is one of the principles that are distant from freewill. Freewill is a principle that is close to an action. It does not make sense to regard both of them as being one and the same.

Yes, His knowledge of what is good and bad applies to one of the options. Although this can be regarded as being rational, it cannot be called freewill even if it has something in common with freewill in the outcome which is the following. The doer applies his might to undertake one of two options. Sharing the result does not necessitate knowledge to be regarded as freewill, and it suffices to apply perfection to it, that is, the freewill.

Question and Answer

It may be asked, “Why should the reality of freewill be the same as His knowledge, the most Praised One? Had the reality of the first been different from that of the other, this would have required plurality

within Him, Praise belongs to Him. And plurality is the tool of composition, while composition depends on probability because each part needs the other parts, and the Almighty is above all of this.”

The answer is this. It means that the attributes are united with one another, and the whole is united with the self. He, Praise belongs to Him, is all knowledge, all might, all life. These attributes, in their realities, are present in the Self by way of simplicity. It is wrong to say that some of them are life and others are knowledge, whereas a third is might because this requires composition in the Self. This is not meant to render the reality of one of the attributes to the other by saying, for example, that His knowledge is His might. This will end up denying all attributes and proving only one.

Briefly, there is only one pure and simple fact that incorporates knowledge, life and ability in its reality without creating plurality and composition in the Self. This is not to say that the reality of His will is the reality of His knowledge because it will require a denial of the reality of freewill and resolve. This will end up denying the freewill (altogether). Also, to say that the reality of His might is rendered to His knowledge ends up denying the might rather than proving the unity. In order to explain what we mean, let us say the following.

We can derive many concepts from the simple thing, and each concept can be a reality without multiplying or composing. Take the outside man as related to Allah, Praise belongs to Him. All of man is the doing of the might of Allah, all of him is known by Allah. It is wrong to say that some of him came to be through His might, while some of him came to be through His knowledge. All (beings and inanimate objects) are there through His might while being, at the same time, known by Him. It is wrong to say that some of them are there due to His might while others are there due to His knowledge. All are decreed by Him and, at the same time, are known to Him. Despite all of this, the reality of what is known is not the same like that of what is decreed.

With this much can you find His essence, Praise belongs to Him, to be all-Knowing, all-Might, and every description has its reality without plurality or composition.⁶

His Freewill, Praise Belongs to Him, Is His Pleasure With What He Does

His freewill, the most Praised One that He is, is the pleasure of His Holy Self with His deeds, His acceptance of them. Since He disseminates and perfects what is good, He is fully pleased. From this self-pleasure comes pleasure in the phase of the deed. When one loves something, he loves its effects and requirements, and this actual love is the freewill in the phase of the action, and it is the one to which reports have rendered freewill as being one of His deeds.

Freewill has two phases: a freewill in the status of the self, and a freewill in the status of the action. His self-pleasure is an innate will. His pleasure with His deeds is freewill taking the form of action.

What one can resign about the above is that it is a theory similar to the one that preceded it, and it does not produce a conclusion. The reality of the freewill is not the same like that of acceptance, and it is not

the same like the reality of pleasure. To explain one through the other is denial of this perfection in His Holy Self, Praise belongs to Him.

It has already been stated that a willing doer is better and more perfect than his opposite: one who has to do something out of necessity. Such perfection in Him can never be denied. Rather, He must be described as such according to the particular development that we reviewed in describing life, and its details will reach you in the proper place.

His Freewill, Praise Belongs to Him, Affects Might and Authority

When a group of logicians found out that the most Praised One could not be described as having “freewill”, and it cannot be counted among His attributes, because there are confusions about it which you have already come to know, they made it one of the characteristics of action, such as His being the Creator, Sustainer, etc. They have said, “We cannot imagine a meaning for His freewill, the most Exalted One that He is, other than affecting might and authority.”

Since the might of the Almighty is perfect from all aspects and directions, and no shortcoming can ever be imagined in it at all, naturally, the action is actualized in the outside. It is then that might is affected without relying on another introduction, as we understand from this verse:

“His command is, “Be,” and it is!” (Qur’an, 36:82).

There are indications about it. Affecting might and authority, be it voluntarily as in His case, Praise belongs to Him, or involuntary, and there is no way for the second because it requires the Almighty to be forced to do something, and in this case He cannot be described as being Omni-Potent, Able.

Regarding the first, is it the role of His being a volunteer doer? Prior to affecting might and implementing authority, there has to be something that affects Him, since He is a voluntary doer. So, it is not sufficient to simply affect authority.

Briefly, simply affecting authority without proving that He has somehow chosen it by Himself is to no avail.

His Freewill, Praise Belongs to Him, is Equal Cause: Action Ratio

Allama Tabatabai has regarded this attribute of the Almighty as being one of the descriptions of His actions. The conclusion of his theory is this: The only attribute from among the self’s, which man finds within him and which can be labeled as freewill, is that of “purpose”. This “purpose”, which is a mediator between knowledge and the actualization of an action is the doer’s psychological inclination to undertake the action.

Freewill can never be described correctly as knowledge because we realize, with our conscience, that our will intervenes between our knowledge of the action and our actually doing it, not of the same

knowledge.

Thereupon, if we want to describe the Almighty as having freewill, after stripping it of shortcomings, we cannot apply it to His knowledge because the essence and truth of knowledge is different from that of freewill. Stripping freewill of shortcomings does not, in fact, make it united with knowledge.

Also, once stripped of shortcomings, freewill becomes an actual attribute of Allah Almighty, similarly to the attributes of creating, bringing into being, granting mercy, etc.

Explanation: When all introductions and causes for creating an action are completed, the characteristics of the freewill will then be stripped, so the Almighty becomes “willing” and the action “willed” without the existence, in that case, of any description for the freewill other than the status of completing the causes behind it.

In other words, freewill, in as far as the Almighty is concerned, is an adjective derived from the combination of causes and requirements for bringing a thing into being. At that juncture, the perfecting of the action’s introductions and their perfection is attributed once to the action and once to Allah Almighty. So, if it is attributed to the action, this status of “perfecting the introductions” is called “the will of the action” and the action itself as “the will of Allah”. If it is attributed to Allah Almighty, this status is called “Allah’s freewill” and Allah Almighty is called “the One Who wills it”.

The *allama*, may Allah sanctify him, says, “The evidences which the men of wisdom have produced to prove that freewill is one of the attributes of the self do not prove more than this: All manifestations of existence rely on the might and knowledge of the Almighty of the best system. They do not prove that His will, the Almighty that He is, is the same as his knowledge or might.”⁷

One may resign that had the factor for the absolution of freewill been the completion of the action, in as far as the cause is concerned, it would require the soundness of its absolution in case the doer is completely forced with regard to the action’s cause, which you will come to see.

Moreover, the perfection of the cause, whether the doer is knowledgeable and aware, is a reality, while freewill is another reality. We have already said that the descriptions must be applied to Allah, Praise belongs to Him, after stripping them of the impurities of possibility and material nature while having reservations about its meaning, not stripping it of its truth and reality.

The Truth in the Matter

The truth is that freewill is one of the entitative attributes, and it applies to Him, the most Praised One, according to the progress which we mention in “life”. In order to explain our objective, we would like to make a useful statement about all His Attributes, Praise belongs to Him.

Every theologian, in the process of applying His Attributes to Him, Praise belongs to Him, must strip

these Attributes of the impurities of shortcomings, space, etc., and must understand them in the sense that suits Him while being reserved about their facts and realities even after such stripping.

For example, we describe Him, Praise belongs to Him, as being all-Knowledgeable, and we apply it stripped of particularities, probable limits, but while being reserved about its reality which is: the presence of knowledge with the all-Knowledgeable One. As regarding His knowledge being entitative or an addition between the Knowledgeable One and what He knows, He is above such particularities.

The case with freewill is similar. Undoubtedly, it describes His perfection, Praise belongs to Him, and it is applied to Him stripped of the characteristics of taking place, eventuality, progression and termination once the objective is achieved, for all of these are characteristics of potential freewill. Rather, what is meant by describing Him as having freewill is that He is a doer by choice versus being a doer who has no choice. This is the basis followed in applying His Attributes, Praise belongs to Him, and here is its explanation for you in the freewill process.

The doer may either be effective by nature, not knowing his action, which is the natural doer, such as the fire when burning. Or he may know his action but not desiring it, becoming a doer without a freewill such as one's shiver. Or he may be knowing, reluctant in doing his deed that he does because it is the lesser evil and the lighter harm, as is the case with a reluctant doer. Or he may be knowledgeable and willing, not hating his deed yet is pleased with it.

The last two types, though having in common a willing doer, but since the doer in the first division is overcome by an external factor, his deed is not regarded as a manifestation of perfect choice. Contrarily to the second, the doer has perfect choice and his deed is a manifestation of his choice.

This true restriction, which revolves between negation and affirmation, drags us to say that His action, Praise belongs to Him, is according to one of the following norms:

He may be a doer lacking knowledge, or knowledgeable lacking freewill, or willing knowledgeable but hating his action because of the existence of a might subduing him, or he is knowledgeable, willing and is pleased with his action. The action of the Creator, Praise to Him, is not one of these norms. The first three do not suit Him, Praise belongs to Him. Therefore, He has to be a doer who is willing, holding the reins of his deed and action, not being forced to create and bring into existence. This is on the one hand.

On the other hand, the freewill in the levels of probability never stops taking place, progressing and terminating after the goal is reached. It is known that applying it in this way to Allah, Praise belongs to Him, is impossible because it requires Him to be the object of His deed. So, if we apply it to Him, Praise belongs to Him, we must remove these impurities. The objective behind His freewill will then be His own choice, that He is not forced to do what He does, not falling under the pressure of a higher force.

If it is accurate to label this choice as "freewill", it is a good objective. Otherwise, we have to say that it is one of the characteristics of action.

In other words, freewill is an attribute of perfection not because it is casual, and it terminates after the objective is reached. Rather, it is an attribute of perfection. This is so because it symbolizes choosing and is a characteristic of non-obligation, so much so that the reluctant doer has a share in making a choice. He chooses one of the ends of an action over that of the other following rational computations, so he prefers doing a deed over the expected harm it will bring.

If the goal and objective behind describing the doer as having the freewill is to prove his having the might to choose, that he is not forced, this describes Him, Glory to Him, as enjoying the ability to choose. He is not being overcome in His might. He is not being obligated to affect His might. Suffices to apply freewill to Him because He is the One Who chooses, who creates the perfect freewill in the most perfect way.

It has already been stated that there is a requirement when applying the attributes to abandon the principles and to stick to the direction of perfection. The perfection of freewill is not in being coincidental, fleeting after the objective is achieved, or due to the doer taking it out of might to the action, or from defect to perfection.

Actually, its perfection lies in its doer having the option, being in control of his action, holding the reins of his deeds. If such is the perfection of freewill, Allah, Praise belongs to Him, is apt to it in the most perfect way. He is the choosing doer, the One Who is not subdued in His domain:

“Allah has full might and control over His affairs” (Qur’an, 12:21).

Freewill in the Sunnah

It appears from precious narrations of the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt (as) that His command and freewill are among the attributes of His actions, such as His being the One Who sustains, creates, etc. Here are excerpts from these narratives.

1. Asim ibn Humayd quotes Imam Abu Abdullah (al-Sadiq) (as) as saying, “... I (Asim) said, ‘Does Allah ever cease to be willing (enjoying freewill)?’ He said, ‘Nobody who is willing is without an objective present with him. Allah never ceases to be Knowing, Able, then He wills.’”⁸

It seems that the freewill the narrator had in mind and about which he inquired is the freewill in the sense of determination to undertake an action, something that is never separated from a deed. So, the Imam (as) wanted to guide him to the freewill that has such a meaning, that it cannot be one of His entitative attributes because this would require what is anticipated to be timeless or the one who anticipates it to be temporal.

So that the narrator may receive an accurate meaning for freewill that suits his level of thinking, the Imam (as) explained freewill in the sense that applies to Him, Praise belongs to Him, in the station of the action. He said, “Allah never ceases to be Knowing, Able, then He wills,” that is, then He creates. But

the context of the narrative does not negate the freewill as being one of His entitative attributes in a way which does not require the objective to be timeless which is: He, the most Praised One, chooses by self, He is neither obliged nor obligated.

Thus, it is obvious there are two phases for His freewill just like His knowledge, and each has its own particular explanation.

2. Safwan ibn Yahya has narrated saying, "I said to the father of al-Hassan (as), "Tell me about the freewill from (the side of) Allah and from creation."

The Imam (as) said, "The creation's freewill is the conscience. The action that appears to them comes from the deed. As regarding it's being from Allah Almighty, His freewill is His creating and nothing else because He does not premeditates, nor does He intends nor contemplates. These actions are negated about Him, they belong to His creation. Allah's freewill is His action and is nothing else. He says, 'Be!' and it is without articulating or speaking or determining or contemplating, nor is there a 'how' for it. Also, there is no 'how' for His actions."⁹

This narrative is united with its predecessor in explaining and analyzing. The freewill that was discussed by both Imam (as) and narrator is the freewill in the sense of the "conscience" and what appears to the anticipator to be the event. It is known that the freewill in this meaning is the norm of happening, the indicator of a probability, and the most Praised One cannot be described as such. For this reason, the Imam (as) focused on negating it in this sense, in as far as the Creator is concerned, saying, "He does not premeditate, nor does He intend or contemplate."

But, so that the narrator could receive a sound concept of the freewill that suits the level of his mentality, the Imam (as) explained the freewill as the will to do an action. He (as) said, "Allah's freewill is His action and nothing else. He says, 'Be!' and it is..." While observing these aspects, it is not right for us to say that the Imam (as) was in the process of negating freewill as being one of the entitative attributes, not even in the sense that suits the most Holy One.

3. Muhammad ibn Muslim has quoted Abu Abdullah (as) as saying, "Freewill brings about an action."¹⁰

The goal behind describing His freewill, the most Praised One that He is, as bringing about an action is to distance the narrator's mind from interpreting it as the determination to undertake an action and making it a description of the Self. Interpreting freewill in this sense is not without faults, including the willing doer being timeless.

For this purpose, the Imam (as) explained freewill through one of its two meanings: freewill substituting the action. He said, "Freewill is His action," an indication that His action takes place and is not timeless.

Thus, you can explain the narratives about the freewill. These narratives focus on its being a description of His action, Praise belongs to Him.¹¹

There are questions here about His freewill, Praise belongs to Him, being an entitative attribute. You have already become familiar with what we have stated about it, so you can answer these questions. Here are some of those questions.

1. The scales in distinguishing the entitative attributes from the operative attributes, as stated by mentor al-Kulayni at the conclusion to the chapter about freewill, is that the first is not categorized within the frame of negation and affirmation; rather it is singly relevant. It is not said that Allah knows and does not know. This is contrary to the second which falls under the cycle of negation and affirmation, so it is said that Allah grants and does not grant. In the light of this, the freewill must be one of the operative attributes. It is the object of negation and affirmation. The most Praised One says,

“Allah desires ease for you, and He does not desire hardship for you” (Qur’an, 2: 185).

The answer to this question follows two paths:

One: The freewill that is subject to negation and affirmation stands in the position of action. As for the freewill that stands in the position of the self, which we interpreted as the perfection of freewill, i.e. option, it does not fall within the frame of negation and affirmation.

Two: This question is also answered by Mulla Sadra who believes that Allah, Praise belongs to Him, has a simple freewill the essence of which is unknown, and that the object of negation and affirmation is the numerical particle will which undertakes the function of an action. As for the origin of the simple freewill, the most Praised One being a doer having freewill, is neither obligated nor forced, Allah, Praise belongs to Him, cannot be robbed of it.

The origin of confusion is mixing the simple will that undertakes the position of the self, which cannot be made plural or dual, with the numerical freewill which undertakes the position of action which can be plural, dual, etc., and it can be negated or affirmed.

Sadra said, “The difference between the detailed numerical will, which is relevant to a portion of natural numbers, or to one of two ends of a probability, as is the case with able animals, and between the truly simple Divine freewill the comprehension of which wears out the minds of the greatest men of wisdom and others.”¹²

2. Had freewill been the same as His Essence, Praise belongs to Him, the world would have had a beginning because it is united with the Self, and the Self is described by it, and it is inseparable from the objective.

The above can be criticized as follows:

First: The confusion is not restricted to those who made the freewill, in its true sense, as a description of His Essence, Praise belongs to Him. Rather, the confusion also reaches those who explained His freewill as meaning knowledge of what is the most fitting based on the existence of things to the

knowledge of the most perfect system which is His own Self. It is impossible to separate the effect from the cause.

It is quite clear without any distinction between calling this knowledge freewill or something else. Had the most perfect system been rendered to His knowledge, with the supposition that His knowledge is timeless, the system itself would have been timeless, too, due to the timelessness of its causality.

Second: If we say that His freewill, Praise belongs to Him, means His being choosing, not obligated by either side, the world would then have to be timeless if He chooses to create the world at a later time.

Mulla Sadra and those who follow in his footsteps believe our ignorance of the reality of this simple unknown entitative freewill and how it functions deters us from knowing how His action comes up, and why He created an incident instead of doing so before then.

There is something very interesting here that needs to be brought up as a comment about this research after having drawn attention to time being a connected whole extracted from something's movement and change from one status to another, from one place to another, as well as from one quantum image to another. The sum of movement is time. Had it not been for the matter and its movement, time would have had no true meaning; it would have been a thing of the imagination.

The above has been proven by in-depth researches in time and motion. The ancients used to claim that time is born of the movement of the stars, the sun and the moon and other planets, but the fact is that every movement is tied to time that draws and generates it.

In a more precise statement, the alterations, be they elemental or ethereal, contain two matters. The first is the status of moving from the start to the end, whether this movement is in the description or in the self. The other is that this movement takes place gradually, it flows rather than thrusts.

According to the first matter according to which movement is described, and according to the other in which time is described. It is as though one thing that is named change, alteration, movement, becomes the start of our extracting two concepts from it, each having its own consideration. This is on the one hand.

On the other hand, matter is realized gradually, in stages, and it does not take place as a whole because its reality is fluid, gradual, similarly to the flow of water. Every material phenomenon takes place following a particular cause. Anything such as this is impossible to materialize as a whole, or a portion of it advances or lags behind. Rather, each part has to materialize within its own condition and place.

Accordingly, numbers and figures are similar. The number 5, for example, has no place to come to exist except between 4 and 6. It is impossible for it to advance before its position or to lag behind it.

Thereupon, the causes and causations that result from a particular system are impossible to permit any of its portions to depart from its position and place.

If you come to know this matter, let us return now to explaining this interesting thing which is: What does one mean when he says that the entitative attribute of Allah, Glory to Him, requires the world being timeless? If he means that the world has to materialize in a time that precedes it and in a past period, this (theory) fails due to the first requirement. This is so because it is presupposed that there is no time before the world of matter since you have come to know that the matter's movement draws time and generates it.

If he means that some of its portions have to precede others, or that they precede the whole world, you know that this is impossible, and that getting each portion out of its frame is impossible due to its nonexistence.

In this regard, Mulla Sadra has made a statement that has a deep meaning. So, one who wishes to review it has to refer to him.¹³

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1. You will come to know, in the discussion of the negative attributes, that His Essence, the most Exalted One, is not subject to events/incidents.
 2. Al-Asfar al-Arbaa, Vol. 6, p. 316.
 3. Ibid., p. 333.
 4. Ibid., p. 331.
 5. Al-Kafi, Vol. 1, p. 109 in a chapter on freewill.
 6. In his comments about sufficiency, the critic-mentor al-Isfahani makes statements in this regard which are very useful for you; so, refer to the conclusion of Al-Diraya, Vol. 1, pp. 116-17 (Tehran edition).
 7. Our objective is to provide a clear report of what this holy person indicated as cited in Taaleeq al-Asfar, Vol. 6, pp. 315-16 and in Nihayat al-Hikma, p. 300.
 8. Al-Kulayni, Al-Kafi, Vol. 1, p. 109, in a chapter about freewill, first tradition.
 9. Ibid., tradition 3.
 10. Al-Kafi, Vol. 1, in a chapter about freewill, tradition 7.
 11. Refer to Al-Kafi by thiqatul-Islam al-Kulayni, Vol. 1, pp. 109-11.
 12. Al-Asfar, Vol. 6, p. 324.
 13. Al-Asfar, Vol. 6, p. 368.

Perpetuity and Eternity

Perpetuity and eternity are among the attributes of the Praised One. Likewise, the “Perpetual One” and the “Eternal One” are among His Names. In their places, both “Timeless” and “ever-Present” may instead be used. The absolute timelessness, and so is ever-presence, are His attributes. He, the most Praised One, therefore, is timeless, perpetual, ever-present, eternal.

The first two names are applied to Him because He is the companion of the sum of all times that will

come to be or those that have already been in the past. The last couple is applied to Him because He is the One Whose presence continues to be in the upcoming times, be they actualized or decreed. He may also be described as being the everlasting in the sense the One Who combines in Him the total of all periods, the past and the future ones.

Briefly, describing Him as the perpetual with regard to the past, and the ever-present, the eternal with regard to the future, is what scholars of logic have agreed about while explaining these names and attributes.

But this explanation suits one whose presence is timed, who accompanies realized or decreed times, the past or the future ones, whereas Allah, Praise belongs to Him, is above time and above accompanying it. Rather, He is the One Who created time, the past, the present and the future. He, therefore, is above time and place. Time does not surround Him, place does not contain Him.

Thereupon, what is right in making an explanation is to say that what is present by the self is one whose presence is not initiated by this self. Rather, it is preceded by void, and existence takes place due to a cause within him. The opposite to the latter is the One that creates existence, the One Whose presence is innate, a must by itself, the One that cannot be affected by nonexistence, nor is He affected by it. Such One is not preceded by void, so He is timeless, perpetual. Likewise, void never affects Him, so He remains eternal, ever-present.

Briefly, the need for existence and its imminence dismisses void forever, for good. Otherwise, His presence will not be a must but a probability, which is the contrary to the supposition.

As regarding the proof for these four attributes that follow the need for His presence, we have already explained it when we discussed the imminence of probable existents ending at a necessary must that stands by himself, on his own. Otherwise, the existents, what is possible of them, will cease to be; they will not materialize.

As regarding the inclusion of the Perpetual, Eternal, Timeless and ever-Present among His Names, Praise belongs to Him, this depends on saying that His Names, Praise belongs to Him, require a lengthy halt. The Almighty cannot be called except what the Quran and Sunnah call Him. The texts in this regard narrated from the Holy Prophet (S) and Imams (as) indicate that the latter names, I mean the “timeless” and the “ever-present”, are the ones that are mentioned as you will come to know at the end of the chapter when we discuss His Names as they exist in the Quran and Sunnah.

Up to here, the research is completed about the positive entitative attributes which are not restricted to the eight ones we have discussed. Any perfection that is regarded as absolute belongs to Him, any shortcoming there is, He is above it. All His Names that exist in the Quran and Sunnah, point out to His perfection, the most Exalted One that He is. They negate His having any need or shortcoming, the Holy One that He is.

So, if we want to describe the most Praised One by one collective Name, it is the absolute perfection, or the pure independence. And if we want to explain this perfection and description that combines all the attributes, it suffices to apply the eight positive attributes that we discussed. Thus, the one single Name, from among all of His Names, which symbolizes the Self that incorporates all attributes of perfection is “Allah”.

All this discussion revolves round the entitative positive attributes, and we have already stated the difference among them. We are going to refer to them anew.

Chapter 5: Operative Positive Attributes

You have come to know, when classifying His Attributes, the most Praised One that He is, that they are of two types: entitative and operative. We said that the difference between both is that the attributes that suffice to describe Him, the most Praised One, are entitative, such as might, life, knowledge.

As for the attributes in which describing the most Praised One depends on an action that He undertakes and the imposition of something other than the self, these are operative attributes derived from His action, Praise belongs to Him. It is to this difference that famous books that deal with logic refer. They indicate that any description (of His attributes), which does not accept negation and affirmation and is relevant singly, is entitative. What is not like that, what falls within the frame of negation once and once of affirmation, it is an attribute of an action.

It is not said that the most Praised One knows and does not know, but it is said that He forgives and does not forgive. The goal in this regard is to discuss some attributes of His actions, Praise belongs to Him, such as speech, truthfulness, etc. He, Praise belongs to Him, speaks, and He is truthful. He, Praise belongs to Him, according to His names and attributes, has two fields in the world of mutability and creation: He grants life and causes death, He sustains and grants blessings, is merciful, forgiving and has other names and attributes which will reach you at the end of the chapter, by His will.

Speech

Following the Quran and Sunnah, Muslims are unanimous that the most Praised One speaks. It seems that discussing this description is the first issue submitted for debates in the history of the science of logic, although this is not definitive. Divine speech issue, what it is, whether it is incidental or timeless,

has occupied the minds of Muslim scholars and thinkers during the time of the first caliphs. Because of it, squabbles took place and even bloody clashes the details of which are recorded in history books. They were described as “محنة خلق القرآن” “trial of creating the Quran”, and we can point out two main factors behind it.

First: The Islamic invasions, in which the Muslims had to mix with others, became a principle for both Islamic and foreign cultures rubbing with each other. Within the tumult charged with contradictory ideologies, the issue of the speech of the most Praised One was submitted in Islamic circles.

Second: The caliphs disseminated the discussion of this issue and others like it so the thinkers would be thus diverted from criticizing the actions and deviations of these caliphs.

We have to point out the source of disseminating this idea in particular and say that discussing the truth about His speech, the most Praised One, first and, second, its being created or not, incidental or timeless, was raised by the Christians who were present in the entourage of the Umayyad dynasty headed by **يوحنا الدمشقي** John of Damascus. John used to cast doubt into the hearts of the Muslims about their creed.

Since the Quran indicated that Jesus son of Mary was “the word of Allah cast to Maryam,” this became a way for this man to spread the concept that this “word of Allah” was timeless. He did so in a particular way. He used to ask them, “Is the word of Allah timeless or not?” If they said it was timeless, he would say, “In this case, you are proving that Jesus is timeless, too.” But if they answered negatively, he would say, “But you have already claimed that His speech is created!”

For this reason, the Mutazilites rose to settle the material of the disputes, saying that the Quran was incidental, created, not timeless; it was created (by whom?) for Allah, Praise belongs to Him.

Since the issue was never submitted in past Islamic centuries, views in its regard branched out and contradicted one another, so much so that some very weak theories came out of it as will be stated later. But the theory of the Mutazilites was well received during the time period from the Abbasid ruler al-Mamun to that of al-Mutawakkil. But the matter turned upside down starting from the time of al-Mutawakkil till the period of the Mutazilites came to an end in favor of the people of *hadith* and of the Hanbalis.

During both periods, unfortunate incidents took place and innocent blood was shed. This distracted the Muslims from thinking about matters of the world and of the creed. This issue has many ones like throughout the Muslims’ history!

Before delving into the objective, we have to first submit these matters:

First: The Asharis and Kilabis, who fixed for Allah timeless speech, have described speech as one of the entitative attributes (of the Almighty), unlike the Mutazilites and Imamites. According to the latter, it

describes His actions, and you will see how this is justified. This dispute rose after noticing two contradictory measures. The Asharis followed the principle of *qiyas* (analogy):

His speech, the speech of the Almighty, describes Him, and everything that describes Him is timeless. Therefore, His speech, the Almighty that He is, is timeless. Others have followed a different analogy. The Almighty's speech is comprised of organized, different parts that are successive when it comes to existence, and anything such as this is eventual. Therefore, His speech is eventual, incidental.

The Asharis, in order to correct His being timeless, interpreted it as a meaning standing by itself called the self-speech. The Mutazilites and Imamites have adopted the second *qiyas* and said that His speech means that He is the One Who created letters and sounds in the outside. Therefore, it so occurred.

Some Hanbalis (or Hanbalites) issued a statement in this regard that combines both contradictory analogies. They have said that His speech is comprised of letters and sounds that stand through Him and, at the same time, are timeless. This is one of the odd statements and ideas.

Second: Explaining His speech, Praise belongs to Him, is not restricted to the three opinions quoted from the Asharis and Adlis (Mutazilis and Imamis) as well as from the Hanbalis. Rather, there is a fourth opinion that is supported by philosophical evidences and is explained by Quranic texts, and it is also indicated in traditions of the Imams from among the Ahl al-Bayt (as). Its summary is this: What informs of His essence and manifestations is His actions and, at the same time, His speech, and you will come to know how this theory is explained.

Third: The path towards the Asharis fixing this attribute is reason and towards the Adlis is hearing, and you will be acquainted with the evidence provided by the Asharis in this regard when we discuss their theory. As regarded citations, Quranic verses have collaborated it to describe Him with it. The Almighty has said,

“Among them are those to whom Allah spoke” (2:253);

“Allah spoke directly to Moses” (4: 164);

“When Moses came to the place appointed by Us, his Lord addressed him...” (7: 143)

and

“It is not fitting for a man that Allah should speak to him except by inspiration, or from behind a veil or by sending a messenger to reveal, with God's permission, what Allah wills, for He is the Most High, the Most Wise” (42:51).

Allah Almighty has explained that His speech to the prophets is no more than fitting in the following categories:

1. "... other than inspiration (*wahi*),”
2. "... or from behind a veil”,
3. "... or He sends a messenger (angel).”

The Almighty refers to the speech that is cast into the souls of prophets swiftly and secretly as “inspiration.”

He has also pointed out saying “... or from behind a veil” about His speech which Moses, peace with him, which was heard at the blessed spot. The Almighty said,

“But when he came to the (fire), a voice was heard from the right bank of the valley, in the blessed spot of the bush (saying): ‘O Moses! Truly I am Allah, the Lord of the worlds...’” (Qur’an, 28:30).

He also pointed out saying, “... or He sends a messenger (angel)” in reference to the instruction in which the angel of revelation plays a role. The most Praised One has said,

“With it came down the Spirit of Faith and Truth to your heart and mind, so that you may admonish” (Qur’an, 26: 193–94).

In reality, the One Who is inspiring in all these three categories is Allah, Praise belongs to Him, once without a mediator by casting into one’s soul, or speaking from behind a veil so only voice is heard but nobody is seen, and once through messengers (of revelation, angels). These three categories exist in sacred verses.

Fourth: The truth about the speech of the most Praised One. You have already come to know that there is no dispute among Muslims in describing the most Praised One as speaking, but the dispute is about its reality first, and from that there are branches of its taking place and whether it is timeless. So, the research must revolve within two situations:

First Situation: Truth of His Speech, the Most Exalted One

Following are the views submitted about the reality of His speech, that of the Almighty:

Theory of the Mutazilis

The Mutazilis have said that the speech of the Almighty is comprised of sounds and letters not standing by Him, the most High, but He creates them in others such as the Preserved Tablet, Gabriel, or the Prophet (S). This has been stated by Abdul-Jabbar, the judge, who said, “The reality of the speech (is) the organized letters and separated sounds, and this is similar to His vesting a blessing on someone else, bestowing sustenance on someone. Thus, He speaks by creating speech in others. It is not

necessary that the doer is affected by the deed.”¹

Apparently, His being the speaker in this sense is not disputed, the dispute is about restricting His speech to this meaning. The author has said the following in his book *Sharh al-Mawaqif*: “What the Mutazilis have said is not denied. Rather, we, too, say it, and we call it articulated speech. We admit that it takes place and that it does not stand by Him, the most High, but we firm a matter beyond this.”²

It is noted about this theory that what is indicated about explaining the speech of the most Praised One being letters and sounds in things correctly applies to the speech with which the most Praised One addresses someone or some nation. Its way is what the Mutazilis have stated. The verses that we have indicated, about how the most Praised One addressed Moses or others, take this into consideration.³ But if there is no specific person or nation to address, His speech, the most Praised One, will be by way of absolution, which is His action, one that reflects His goodness, shows His perfection.

The Mutazilis contend themselves with the explanation which they had stated and which fits in the first category. As regarding the second category, it does not apply to it. His action by way of absolution is not similar to sounds and pronouncements. Rather, it is outside particularities, essences and occurrences. The most Praised One has called His actions “speech” in more than one verse, and this is the theory about which we indicate the following:

Theory of the Men of Wisdom

Undoubtedly, speech in the view of most people is comprised of letters and sounds produced by the speaker, the one through whom they stand, and it takes place when there are air waves and vibration, so much so that if these waves are gone, so is speech. But social man expands in the use of this term. He calls “speech” a quoted sermon or poetry cited from someone, saying that this is the speech of the Prophet or the composition of Imriul Qais although their speech is gone because its waves and vibrations have gone. It only expands the application of the term, the witnessing of the impact on what is narrated or cited.

Thereupon, any action by the speaker that produces the same impact that his speech indicates, without manifesting the meanings and facts the doer hides within, is accurately labeled as speech by way of expanding and developing. You have come to know that the lamp was called as such even when its connotation was as simple as a twig burning. But since its effect, giving light, exists in the oil-fed, gas and electrical fixture, it is used for all.

Similarly is life the way we have explained it. So, if the label is right and such an expansion in both terms is sound, it applies to the term “speech”, too. It was applied for sounds and successive letters and sounds that reveal the meanings within the speaker’s conscience. Yet had there been something that described successive sounds and letters in a higher and more perfect way, it would have been correct to call it speech or statement.

This thing that stands in the place of articulated speech is the deed of a doer, and it is fit to be called actual speech, for every doer reveals the extent of knowledge, ability, greatness and perfection that he has. Yet the connotation of articulations of the innermost and the conscience is juridical, while the indication of magnanimity of actions and impacts, in as far as the doer and impacting factor are concerned, is formative.

For this reason, we see that the most Praised One describes Jesus son of Mary as “the word of Allah which He cast to Virgin Mary,” saying,

“Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, was (no more than) a Messenger of Allah, and His Word which He bestowed on Mary” (Qur’an, 4: 171).

How can our master Jesus not be the word of Allah as He reveals His might, Glory to Him, how He creates a human in the womb of a woman without cohabitation between a male and a female? It is for this reason that the very existence of Jesus is regarded as a Divine Sign, a Miracle.

In the light of this basis, the most Praised One regards everything that exists in the cosmos as His words saying,

“Say: ‘If the ocean were ink (to write) my Lord’s words, the ocean would be exhausted before my Lord’s words are, even if We add another ocean like it for its aid’” (Qur’an, 18: 109).

The most Praised One also says,

“And if all trees on earth were pens and the ocean (were ink), with seven oceans behind it to add to its (supply), God’s words would still not be exhausted (in the writing)” (Qur’an, 31:27).

Imam Ali (as) says, “He (the Almighty) says ‘Be!’ to whatever He wants to be, and it is, neither with an articulated voice, nor with a call that is heard. Rather, His speech, the most Praised One, is His action, He initiates and forms it, a thing which had never been before. Had it been timeless, it would have been another god.”⁴

The Imam (as) is quoted as having explained the greatness of creating mankind in these verses of poetry:

*Do you claim that you are a small planet,
While the cosmos is summed up in you?!
And while you are the clear book wherein
What is hidden in its letters is manifest?!*

Everything in the tablet of the universe, anything that is or that can be, is His word. It tells us of the perfection, goodness, knowledge and might that exist from the very start.

Allama Tabatabai has made a statement in this regard which we would like to sum up thus:

“What people call speech, statement, sentence, is a speaker demonstrating a meaning which he has in his mind through composed sounds put forth to express a meaning. Once it is articulated, the addressed person or listener hears him, so the meaning of what is contained in the speaker’s mind moves to the mind of the listener or addressed person, achieving the purpose of that speech which is: getting someone to understand, to comprehend.

There is something interesting in this regard to which men of wisdom attracted attention. The truth of speech stands through a hidden and implied meaning. As regarding the rest of particularities, such as its being produced through sound which takes place in man’s chest, its passage through the throat and reliance on the mouth’s sectors and position, so as it can be heard, these particularities follow the confirmations and are not intruders into the truth of the meaning through which speech stands.

Articulated presented speech, which indicates what one has in mind, is speech. So is the signal that suffices to express a meaning; it, too, is speech. Also, your own making a signal with your hand to someone to sit, stand, etc. is an order and a statement. The same applies to outside existents. Since they indicate their presence by virtue of causation, through their particularities inherent within them, they become external existents. Since their existence is an example of completion of their cause, it is speech.

Thereupon, the whole of the world that occupies a space is the speech of Allah, Praise belongs to Him. He speaks it by bringing it into existence, creating it. Thus, what is hidden of the perfection of His Names and Attributes manifests itself. Also, the Almighty is the Creator of the world, and the world is His creation. Likewise, the Exalted One speaks through this world, manifesting the secrets of the Names, the Attributes; the whole world is His speech.”⁵

The Commander of the Faithful and Master of those who believe in the Unity of Allah, peace with him, says the following in *Nahjul-Balagha*: “He informs but not through a tongue and palate; He hears but not through cracks and instruments. He says but does not pronounce, He preserves but does not take precaution. He wills and does not hide. He loves and is pleased without gentleness. He hates and is angered without an effort. He says to what He wants to be: ‘Be!’ and it is, not through a voice that hits ears, nor is it through a call that is heard; rather, His speech, the most Glorified One that He is, is an action which He initiates and for which He gives a form. It was not before, then it came to exist; had it been timeless, it would have been another god.”⁶

It is to this (meaning) that Sabzawari the critic points out in his poem saying,

*Your tongue is the path of eloquence tread,
Speech of the most Praised One is actions enacted,
If you know this much, you will know how to praise
Things, how His words to these things are appended.*⁷

Up to here, you have come to know the theory of the men of wisdom with regard to His speech, the most Praised One, and it is now time to look into the theory of the Asharis in this regard.

Theory of the Asharis

The Asharis have made speech one of the entitative attributes. They have described His speech, Praise belongs to Him, as the self speech. They say that self-speech is different from knowledge, self-will or unwillingness (the absence of will). They have been artistic about explaining what they term as “different arts”.

Before we quote their texts, we would like to draw a useful introduction in this regard. Undoubtedly, when the speaker tells something, there are many images and testimonies in doing so, all spelling out knowledge. As regarding imagination, it is bringing about the subject, the connotation and the mental relationship between them.

As regarding credibility, it is surrender in the same rate according to what is already known. Undoubtedly, imagining and believing are two branches of knowledge. Knowledge is divided into them. They have said: If knowledge is surrender by ratio, it is either belief or imagination. This is relevant to telling about something.

As for initiating, when it comes to bidding, it is a will in the mind, and when it comes to forbidding, there is disliking for it. When it comes to questioning, wishing, pleading, each has its own suitable case.

The Asharis say that in the informative statements, i.e. what is beyond knowledge, and in initiating, such as bidding and forbidding, beyond the will and the disliking, it is a thing in the mind of the speaker called self-speech, which is the true speech. As for articulated speech, it expresses it. This self-speech in man is incidental, its taking place follows the self. In Him, the most Praised One, it is timeless. In order to explain the status, let us quote pillar Ashari men in this regard:

1. Al-Fadl al-Qawshaji has said this in his book *Sharh al-Tajreed* (explaining abstractions): “One who brings about the form of bidding, forbidding, calling, informing, inquiring about something or something else, finds in himself meanings which he expresses and which we call ‘sensed speech’. The meaning which he finds within himself and circles in his mind is not different according to the difference in situations and terms, and the speaker means it takes place on the listener accordingly, and this is what we call speech.”⁸

It is not hidden that what he stated in general does not express something clear. But al-Fadl ibn Rozbahan has stated something that is more clear.

2. In *Nahj al-Haqq*, al-Fadl has said, “Speech according to them has more than one meaning which they apply to combinations of heard letters once, and once they apply it to the meaning that stands by itself and is expressed by pronouncements. They say that it is speech in truth, which it stands on its own

and is timeless. This speech has to be proven, since people in general do not understand speech to be anything but combined letters and sounds, so let us say the following:

Let one go back to himself if he wants to say something. Does he understand on his own that he organizes and fakes meanings that he intends to articulate? One who seeks audience of a ruler or a man of knowledge organizes inwardly meanings and things and tells himself that he is going to say this and that. A fair-minded person would not argue against it. Such is the self-speech.

Then we say by way of producing evidence that the pronouncements which we articulate carry connotations that stand by themselves, so we say that these connotations connote one's own self speaking."⁹

One may resign saying that what he (al-Fadl) says is accurate, but what is important is to prove that these meanings in conveying something are not akin to knowledge. This is not confirmed, rather, the opposite is. The meanings that circle in the speaker's mind are nothing but envisioning individual or compounded meanings, or they represent a relative surrender (to one's own intuition). So, the self-speech is rendered to envisioning and to testimonies.

Is here anything beyond knowledge so we may call it self-speech? Also, when a speaker organizes composed meanings, he does not organize anything but his own likes and dislikes, or what serves as an introduction to them, such as imagining a thing or believing in its benefit. Thus, the self-speech is rendered, in its composition, to liking and disliking. Is there anything else other than them, other than envisioning, that we may call self-speech?

In that case, speaking will not be describing what is beyond knowledge in informing and what is beyond it with the freewill in composing. Yet the Asharis insist on proving that a speaker describes what is beyond knowledge and will. For this reason, they say, "Since he is speaking on his own, it is not the same as his being knowledgeable and having a self-freewill." It is better, then, to review what the Asharis have brought forth in order to prove that self-speech is something beyond knowledge. Here is the explanation:

First: Self-speech is not knowledge because one may tell about what he does not know, or even knows its opposite, or something that he doubts. So, informing about a thing is not knowledge of it. Sayyid al-Shareef has said the following in his book *Sharh al-Mawaqif*: "What is meant by referring everything on one's mind in the condition of knowing to knowledge is referring to knowledge which combines envisioning and believing. One who informs about something that he doubts, or one who knows the opposite, imagines the subject, the connotation and the judgmental ratio, then he informs of it.

What his mind contains of these three visions does not get out of the frame of knowledge, which is: envisioning. Yes, there is nothing in his mind of the other portion of knowledge, which is: believing. The source of confusion is explaining knowledge as being believing, so they claim that it is not present when notifying about what is on the mind of the doubtful informer or of that who knows its opposite. What is

being overlooked is that the absence of knowledge in the sense of believing does not prove the absence of the other portion of knowledge, which is envisioning.”

Second: In the field of composition, they say that there is, during the period of composing, something else other than liking and disliking which is self-speech (intuition). This is so because one may order something which he does not want, such as one who tests his slave to see if he obeys him or not. The objective here is to test, not to undertake, the actions. 10

One may produce the following resigns regarding the above:

1. Testing commands are of two types: One in which the freewill is relevant to the same introduction and has nothing to do with the action itself, as is the case when the Almighty, Praise belongs to Him, ordered His Friend, (Abraham) peace with him, to slaughter his son Ishamel. This is why, when the Friend performed the introductions (to undertaking the actions), he was addressed thus:

“O Abraham! You have fulfilled the vision” (Qur’an, 37: 105).

In the other part, freewill is relevant to the introduction and its conclusion. The whole matter is that one who commands something has an interest based on undertaking that action, not in the action itself, such as a ruler ordering one of his ministers to bring water in order to let the attendants understand that he is obedient, not rebellious, to him.

In this case, as in the previous one, the situation is not without a freewill. The whole matter is that in the first part, the freewill is relevant only to the introduction, whereas here both introduction and conclusion are relevant to the freewill. So, their saying that there is no will in the testing orders is not accurate.

2. What is obvious for one who produces a conclusion is imagining that the freewill of the one issuing the command is relevant to others, such as those whom he orders, doing something. For this reason, it is judged that there is no freewill relevant to others doing something when they are put to test.

One may deduct that there is something else in them other than the freewill that may be called “request”, or it may be self-speech. But the truth is something else. Desiring an action is not relevant to others doing something because doing it is outside the frame of the choice of the one issuing the order. A thing such as this is not connected to freewill. For this reason, what is known is that the will in bidding and forbidding is relevant to the action of the one being ordered. It is visionary speech, it is not relevant to the optional action.

What others do is not optional. So, there is no avoiding saying that the order’s freewill is relevant to the action itself that is: bidding and forbidding. If you will, you can say that an action is either ordered or prohibited. Both fall within the frame of choosing a matter; both are regarded among freewill-relevant actions.

Yes, the goal behind bidding and forbidding is the ordered person carrying out orders, or he must stop

doing what he was ordered not to do. The person under obligation knows that his disobedience implies worldly or deferred consequences.

Thereupon, the freewill in bidding is relevant to serious and testing orders according to a criterion that is: One's will is relevant to bidding or forbidding someone who receives his order. It is not relevant to the ordered person himself or to his abstention from doing something, for it is the goal of the ordering individual that is irreversible. The person above confuses what is relevant to freewill with what is meant as bidding and forbidding.

It may come to mind that an objection may be raised against what we have stated, that the one issuing the order is a human whose will is not connected to what others do because this is outside his option. As for what is obligatory, the most Praised One is the One Who orders and subdues: His will is affected in everything:

“Not one of the beings in the heavens and the earth but must come to (Allah), the Most Gracious, as His servant” (Qur’an, 19:93).

Yet the response to this objection is obvious. What is meant by freewill here is the legislative, not formative, freewill, the one that subdues the servants, the one that gets them out of their ability to choose, rendering them without freewill, such is outside the scope of this research.

The Praised One has said,

“Had it been your Lord's will, all people on earth would have believed!” (Qur’an, 10:99).

This verse shows that the will of the most Praised One does not hinge on all people on earth believing (in Him). On the other hand, His freewill hinges on *iman* (conviction, certitude) of every aware adult person. The Praised One has said,

“Allah tells (you) the truth, and He shows (you) the (right) way” (Qur’an, 10:99).

“The truth” in this verse is general. Likewise, His guidance to the right way is for all people.

The most Praised One has said,

“Allah wishes to make clear to you and to show you the ordinances of those before you” (Qur’an, 4:26),

in addition to other verses that indicate the generality of His legislative guidance.¹¹

3. Unrepentant sinners and unbelievers are required what people of obedience to the Almighty and belief in Him are required to do, according to the text of the Holy Quran. Their holding them responsible is not initiated by a will from Allah, Praise belongs to Him. Otherwise His freewill will have to be separated from His objective. There has to be another source for obligation that we once call self-talk (intuition), and

once request. The outcome is that there is something else in mutability other than freewill.

The Mutazilites have answered by saying that had His freewill, Praise belongs to Him, hinged on an action by itself, and it is not separated from the objective. But if it hinges on others' actions, since it hinged through the actions of a servant's freedom and choice, there is no avoiding actions being preceded by the servant's choice. If this servant wills and chooses, the action materializes. If he does not, no action takes place.

In other words, the freewill of the most Praised One does not hinge on an action by one of His servants at best, whether he wanted it or did not. Rather, it hinges on his doing it provided premeditation had preceded his will. If it is preceded, the action takes place; otherwise, it does not.

It is better said that His freewill, Praise belongs to Him, never lags behind His objective without a difference between the formative and the legislative freewill. As for the first, if His formative freewill hinges on directly creating a thing, or through one of the causes, it imminently takes place. The most Praised One has said,

“Truly when He intends to create a thing, His order is: ‘Be,’ and it is!” (Qur’an, 36:82).

As for the second, it is related to the same mutability and the starting of an action, or the same desisting and alienating himself, which undoubtedly materializes in all His orders and prohibitions, whether His servant obeyed or disobeyed.

As regarding a servant's actions or abstention from an action, they both are irrelevant to the legislative will in His orders and prohibitions. Their lagging behind is not regarded as violating the principle. This is so because others' actions are not related to anyone's freewill, others' orders do not fall within a desiring person's option.¹² For this reason, we said in its place that the legislative freewill is relevant to the self's actions, that is, initiating a start (of doing something) or prohibiting it, not to others' actions.

We arrive at this result: The legislative freewill is present in the case of unrepentant sinners and unbelievers. What is relevant materializes even if a servant does not comply.

4. What al-Fadl ibn Rozbahan has stated is that every rational person knows that the speaker is one who enjoys the attribute of speaking. If the meaning of the most Praised One speaking is His creating of speech, this description does not stand through Him. It is not said about one who creates speech to be a speaker. Likewise, it is not said about one who creates taste that he does taste.¹³

One may resign about the above that the principle standing through the doer is not one section, that is, the start section. Rather, it has sections. An action may be done by an individual, such as killing, striking the killer, beating someone, etc. And a section may be incidental, such as acquiring knowledge, the might in the one who knows, his potence, etc. Speaking, like beating, is not a start principle in the doer; rather, it is a mutability principle.

For this reason, the most Praised One created speech, so He is described as speaker. He is described with the attribute of conveying statements. Actually, it may be right through absolute even if the principle stands always through the doer, neither initiated nor started, but suffices to touch on the principle, such as one who sells dates and milk described as such. As for not applying the term “taster” for the One Who creates tasting, it is because the accuracy of derivation after one of the functions is not standard, so the most Praised One could be termed as “taster”, “smeller”, etc., because He creates (the faculty of) tasting, smelling, etc. Perhaps theologians are too cautious to describe Him with them in order to distance themselves from what can be misunderstood as giving Him a body and the requirements of doing so.

5. Just as the term “speech” is applied to articulated statements, it also is applied to what exists by itself. The most Praised One has said,

“Whether you hide your word or manifest it, He certainly has (full) knowledge of the secrets of (all) hearts” (Qur’an, 67: 13).

One may surrender, regarding the above, by applying “speech” in the absolute sense to what exists by itself when it is done by some way, or by caring about something, arguing about it. The “speech” is what is articulated by the tongue. So, it is not applied to what exists in one’s mind, something for which there is no reality other than the known image except by way of interest.

Research’s Conclusion

The Asharis claimed that what is inside the speaker’s mind when he makes an informative or initiated sentence, is an image that testifies to the first. And there is behind the freewill in the second something that they call “self’s speech” (intuition). They may have specifically applied the term “request” to self-speech in the mutability section. Thus, they corrected (the concept of) His being Speaker, the most Praised One that He is, just as He is Knowledgeable and Omni-Potent, and that all (these adjectives) are self-attributes.

But research and analysis, as you have already come to know, provided us with the opposite of their conclusion. This is due to what you have witnessed, that is, there is nothing behind knowledge in the informative sentences, nor is there behind the freewill and hatred, etc. in the mutability sentences, anything which we label as self-speech. You have already come to know that request is also the same as freewill.

Had they meant by self-speech as the meaning of the articulated speech or its informing image that applies to its term, its essence is rendered to knowledge and nothing more. And if they meant it to be a meaning beyond that, we do not know it within ourselves if we would refer to it.

As regarding the Ashari rendering his conclusions to this verse of poetry:

*Speech is in the heart but,
The tongue identifies what the heart has,*

Logical researches occupy a higher status than using poetry as a mechanism to lead to them.¹⁴

Thus, you come to know that what the critic al-Tusi says, i.e. that “self-speech is not rational”, is sound, there is nothing wrong with it.

Up to here, the three theories have been made clear, those of the Mutazilites, those of the wise men, and those of the Asharis.¹⁵ With it, talk in the discussion of the first situation is completed, and it is time now to discuss in the second: whether the speech of the most Exalted One is incidental or timeless.

Second Situation: Is It Incidental or Timeless?

When philosophy came to exist, and when issues about the attributes of Allah Almighty were discussed by men of logic, the most important issue submitted for discussion was that of the speech of Allah Almighty and that of the creation of the Quran. The Mutazilites adopted the argument that the Quran was created. They defended it through various means.

Since the Abbaside government during the time of al-Mamoon and those after him up to the time of al-Wathiq Billah supported the Mutazilites' movement and views, the latter benefited from this clout. They tested the scholars of Islamic lands in this issue. The result of this test was that all *faqih*s in that century responded with (in favor of) the creation theory. Only very few abstained from doing so, and imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal stood as the head of this group.

The issue of the speech of Allah Almighty being non-created can be rendered to the second century. It remained hidden till the time of al-Mamoon. Although the people of *hadith* stick to not saying anything about which statement was made by the Messenger of Allah (peace with him and his progeny) or by the period of the *sahaba*, they violated their principle in this issue, so much so that they were dragged into announcing it publicly from the tops of their mosque pulpits.

The main reason for that is due to Ahmed ibn Hanbal and his stance. He propagated the notion that the Quran was neither created nor timeless, defending it enthusiastically and bearing for its sake hardships recorded in history's annals. You have come to know how he refused to surrender to the theory of the creating of the Qur'an when the *faqih*s questioned him, so he was jailed, tortured and whipped. Despite all of this, he demonstrated firmness and steadfastness, and this was the most important factor that led to his fame throughout the Islamic lands thereafter. History has recorded a number of debates that went on between him and thinkers from among scholars of logic.

In order to explain the status in the situation, we would like to bring about what Ahmed ibn Hanbal and Abul-Hassan al-Ashari had brought forth in this regard.

Ahmed ibn Hanbal has said, "The Quran, the speech of Allah, is not created. One who claims that the Quran is created is a Jahmi apostate. One who claims that the Quran is the speech of Allah, the most Exalted and the most Great, then he stops without saying that it is created or not created is worse than the first. One who claims that our own pronouncing of the Quran and reciting it is created, while the Quran is Allah's speech, is Jahmi. And one who does not label these folks as apostates is just like them. Allah spoke to Moses manifestly. It was from Allah that Moses heard for sure. And He *handed him over the Torah with His hand*. Allah has always been a speaker, knowledgeable, praise be to Allah, the best of creators." 16

Abul-Hassan al-Ashari has said, "We say that the Quran, the speech of Allah, is not created, and that one who says that the Quran is created is *kafir*, apostate." 17

It has been cited about the imam of the Hanbalis that he said, "There are people who say that the Quran is neither created nor uncreated." He added saying, "These are more harmful to people than the Jahmis. Woe unto you! If you say that it is not created, say that it is!" Ahmed (ibn Hanbal) said, "These are evil people." It was said to him, "What do you yourself say?" He said, "What I think, and what I conclude, and it is something in which there is no doubt, is that the Qur'an is not created." Then he added saying, "Praise belongs to Allah! Who can doubt this?!" 18

Such are the arguments of the people of *hadith*, the Hanbalis and the Asharis. As for the Mutazilites, Judge Abdul-Jabbar says, "As regarding our sect in this regard, the Quran is the speech of Allah Almighty and His inspiration. It is created, something new that Allah revealed to His Prophet so it may be a flag post, a guide, towards his being a prophet. He made it a guide for us to the rulings so we may refer to it to determine what is permissible and what is prohibitive, and for this we are obligated to praise and to thank Him.

So, what we nowadays hear and recite, if what we read is not created anew by Allah Almighty, it is added to Him by way of reality just as you now add when you recite a poem by Imriul-Qais to its reality, even though Imriul-Qais has not this moment composed it." 19

Before we analyze the issue, we have to state the following introductions:

1. If the issue of the Quran being created or timeless brought about two groups each of which calls the other *kafir*, apostate, such as the imam of the Hanbalis says, "One who claims that the Quran is created is a *kafir* Jahmi," while the Mutazilites say, "To say that the Quran is not created, is timeless, is to utter *shirk* (association) with Allah, Praise belongs to Him," this issue must be analyzed in the light of reason, Quran and Sunnah by avoiding any excitement or fuss.

Undoubtedly, this issue was submitted during certain atmospheres where understanding was rare, when there were disputes. Otherwise, what is the sense in thus becoming divided about a matter one of the two groups claims that it is the factor of apostasy and that *Tawhid* is its opposite, while the other group claims the opposite?

Had the issue of the creation of the Quran occupied such a status, revelation should have clearly supported one of these two theories and thus removed the curtain from the face of reality. Yet we are of the opinion that there is no text in the Islamic Sharia about this issue. It rather surfaced in the beginning of the second (Hijri) century.

Yes, both groups have cited Quranic verses, but the indications (of these verses) are ambiguous and, if one supposes they serve as indications, they are not fully comprehended except by al-Awhadi. Anything regarded as an indication of *Tawhid* or *shirk* requires a Quranic verse that accepts no interpretation and is obvious to everyone now and always.

In his book titled *Al-Ibana*, al-Ashari has quoted reports about how Abu Haneefa was an apostate (*mushrik*, one committing *shirk*, associating others with Allah), that others dissociated themselves from him, and that the son of Abu Layla required him to regret and repent.

The reason was Abu Haneefa advocating the Quran having been created. Abu Haneefa, therefore, repented by way of *taqiyya* for fear he would be killed as he himself stated.²⁰ Yet al-Tahawi indicated in his work *Aqaid* the opposite of the above and advocated the Quran as having been uncreated, although he was a follower of Abu Haneefa in his taste and conduct.

2. Some members of the posterity used to feel too embarrassed to describe the Quran as being timeless. They only said that it was not created. Yet they gradually elaborated on their statement till they described the speech of Allah as being timeless. It is known that describing something as being uncreated or timeless is something a man of knowledge does not dare to delve into because both of these descriptions are among His own characteristics.

Had His speech been something different from Himself, how can it be described as being uncreated or timeless? If we suppose that this doctrine, which only al-Awhadi tackles in the science of logic, how can this obscure issue be something in which every Muslim should believe despite the fact that the simple individual, even one who enjoys merits, cannot analyze and realize a thing other than Allah, Praise belongs to Him, while being at the same time uncreated?

The ease of the doctrine and its easy following is one of the characteristics of the Islamic Sharia. This distinguishes it from all other sects prevailing throughout the world. Yet believing in something being other than what Allah Almighty has stated, which differs from His own Self, whether created or timeless, is something so difficult for elite men, what would you say about commoners?

3. What appears to be the case with regard to the people of hadith is that the recited Quran is timeless, something which commonsense and reason, and even the Quran itself, denies. This belief has been rendered void, so much so that Sheikh Muhammad Abdoh assaulted it saying, "One who says that the recited Quran is timeless is much worse and more misleading in his belief than every creed the Quran itself testified to its being misled, calling for following its opposite."²¹

When Ibn Taymiyyah, who installed himself as proponent of the doctrine of the men of hadith, noticed that it was a trivial belief, he openly advocated that the recited Quran is incidental and that verses such as these:

“O you wrapped up in garments!” (Qur’an, 73: 1),

“O you draped (in a mantle)!” (Qur’an, 74: 1)

and

“Allah has indeed heard (and accepted) the statement of the woman who pleads with you concerning her husband...” (Qur’an, 58: 1)

and others prove that a call, hearing it, etc., took place at a certain time, not since eternity.²²

What is amazing is that he seeks evidence from the Mutazilites about the recited Quran being incidental, saying that the order of the words’ letters and of the sentences requires them to be incidental because the way the statement “Bismillah”, for e.g., depends on the “Bi” taking place then its vanishing through the “s”, etc., succeeding it. So, something taking place and vanishing that happens to the letters individually never separates from them, otherwise, there can be no word created. So, how can something like this be timeless, eternal, when applied to Allah Almighty?

4. Since the notion that the Quran is not created, or to say that it is timeless, has been the slogan of the folks of *hadith* and their distinguishing sign while, on the other hand, it is said that the recited and pronounced Quran is timeless, something which sound reason cannot accept, the Asharis came up with a new theory with which they corrected the statement that the Quran is not created, that it is timeless. They sought a safe haven with saying that what is sought from the speech of Allah Almighty is not the recited Quran but the self–speech, and you have already come to know the extent of soundness of advocating (the theory of) the self–speech.²³

At any rate, advocating the timeliness of the self–speech is not isolated from saying that the recited Quran is timeless.

5. How can the statement about the creation of the Quran and its being an event be a factor for *kufr*, apostasy, while the most Praised One describes it as being brought forth, that is, something new?

The most Praised One has said,

“Mankind’s reckoning comes closer and closer: Yet they do not heed and they turn away. (Nothing) ever comes to them of a renewed message from their Lord except that they listen to it in jest” (Qur’an, 21: 1-2).

What is meant by the “message from their Lord” is the Holy Quran by virtue of this verse:

“We have, without doubt, sent down the message, and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption)” (Qur’an, 15:9),

and also this verse:

“The (Qur’an) is indeed the message, for you and for your people, and you shall (all) soon be brought to account” (Qur’an, 43:44).

What is meant by “created” is something new which describes the Quran. The meaning of its being new is that it was revealed after the Bible. The Bible, too, was new because it was revealed after the Torah. The same applies to some chapters and verses of the Quran. They came to them some after others. It is not meant that it was new from the standpoint of its revelation. Rather, it is meant to be new by itself by the token it was described as the “remembrance/mention”. The remembrance by itself is something new. This does not apply to its revelation, for there is no sense in describing what takes place on its own as being revealed.²⁴

How can it be said that the Quran is timeless while the most Praised One says the following about it:

“If it were Our will, We could take away what We have sent you by inspiration: Then you would find none to plead your affair in that matter against Us” (Qur’an, 17:86).

So, is it correct to apply taking away what is timeless and rendering it nonexistent?

6. What is amazing is that the topic of dispute was never clearly defined so one may be able to issue a judgment in its regard. There are here possibilities into which the folks of hadith as well as the Asharis may look when describing His speech, the most Praised One, as being timely. We would like to submit them on the carpet of research, and we ask a judgment be issued in their regard derived from reason and the Quran:

- a. The pronouncements and wise statements, the like of which humans in all centuries have been unable to produce, were brought by the custodian of revelation (Gabriel) to the Honored Prophet [Muhammad (S)]. The Messenger of Allah (S) recited them, the ears grabbed them and the pens wrote them down on sacred tablets. So, they are not at all created, neither to Him, Praise belongs to Him, nor to others.
- b. The lofty meanings and sublime concepts in the fields of genesis, legislation, events, manners, etiquettes, etc.
- c. The Praised One’s own Self, the Attributes of knowledge, ability, life–giving which the Quran discusses and to which it points out with its pronouncements and statements.
- d. The knowledge of the most Praised One as recorded in the Holy Quran.

e. The Quran is not created for humans even though it was created by Allah.

These probabilities do not only apply to the Holy Quran but are repeated in all divinely revealed books that descended to His prophets and messengers.

Here is an explanation of judging them from the standpoint of taking place or from that of timelessness.

As for the first, I do not think that anyone who has a measure of rationality and intellect would believe that they are not created, or that they are timeless. How so while they are things, existents among many others, things that can come to exist but not necessarily have to exist? If they were *not* created, then they have to be a must by themselves, which is nothing but committing *shirk* in Allah, the most Praised One. Even if it is supposed that the most Praised One speaks these pronouncements and statements, His speaking is not outside the scope of His actions. So, can it be said that His action is not created or is timeless?

As for the second, it is close to the first with regard to commonsense. The Quran, as well as all sacred books, contains events which took place during the Prophet's lifetime, the debates with the People of the Book and with the polytheists, what happened during his invasions and wars, the painful incidents or the happy ones. So, can we describe as being "timeless" the incident that these verses narrate:

"Allah has indeed heard (and accepted) the statement of the woman who pleads with you concerning her husband and carries her complaint (in prayer) to Allah, and Allah (always) hears the arguments between both sides among you, for Allah hears and sees (all things)" (Qur'an, 58: 1).

The most Blessed and Exalted One informed, in the Quran and divinely revealed books, the incidents that happened to His prophets and to all nations and the norms of torment with which they were tormented. He also informed about the genesis, how He created and managed. So, these facts that are stated in the Holy Quran undoubtedly imply time periods, they are not timeless.

As for the third, there is no doubt that His own Self, His attributes of knowledge, ability, life-giving, etc., as well as what relates to them, such as His being the One and Only God, Timeless without any doubt, not created by virtue of commonsense. But the Quran is not the only book that talks about these things, everything humans say point out to these facts. The meaning referred to by pronouncements and sounds are timeless and, at the same time, so are the speeches and sentences, all relate to time.

As regarding the fourth, that is, His knowledge, Praise belongs to Him, of what these books contain and of what they do not, undoubtedly it is as timeless as He Himself is. None from among the theological logicians, with the exception of the Karamis, has said that His knowledge is incidental.

As for the fifth, I mean His being, Praise belongs to Him, speaking eternal, timeless self speech, not with letters or sounds, it contradicts knowledge and freewill. You have already come to know that what the

Asharis term a self–speech does not come out of the frame of knowledge and freewill, and there is no doubt that His knowledge and simple freewill are timeless.

As for the sixth, that is, the objective behind negating its being non–created, since the Quran is not created for humans while at the same time it is created by Allah, Praise is due to Him, this matter is denied by any Muslim. The Quran is created by Allah, the Praised One, and people in their entirety cannot bring about something like it. The Praised One has said,

“Say: ‘If all mankind and jinns were to gather together to produce the like of this Qur’an, they would not be able to produce the like of it, even if they back each other up with help and support’” (Qur’an, 17:88).

This analysis connotes the issue was submitted in disturbed atmospheres, and people were in disarray. The topic of discussion was not presented clearly so a distinction could be made between what is positive and what is negative, so right might be distinguished from wrong. Despite this confusion in presenting the subject of the dispute, we see that the folks of *hadith* and the Asharis seek evidences from Quranic verses to prove the timelessness of His speech and its being non–created. Here are the evidences for you one by one.

Al–Ashari has sought evidences in different ways:

First Evidence: It is this verse:

“For to anything which We have willed, We merely say to it, ‘Be,’ and it is” (Qur’an, 16:40).

Al–Ashari says, “What proves from Allah’s Book that His speech is not created is His own saying,

‘For to anything which We have willed, We merely say to it, ‘Be,’ and it is’ (Qur’an, 16:40).

Had the Quran been created, it should have been said to it: “Be!” and it becomes. Had Allah, the most Exalted and the most Great, said to the speech “Be!”, such speech would have had a speech of its own! This requires one of two matters: The matter must either be rendered to saying that Allah’s speech is not created, or every speech becomes a reality by saying “No!” to a purpose, which is impossible. When this becomes impossible, it becomes accurate and confirmed that Allah, the most Exalted One and the most Great, has speech that is not created.²⁵

One may submit the following about the above:

One: The deduction is based on the order in the said verse and its likes being a pronounced order. It is composed of letters and sounds. The most Praised One is like a commanding ruler. Just as he communicates when he orders his ministers and aides through pronouncements, thus does the most Praised One seek assistance during His creation of the heavens and earth with pronouncement and speech, addressing the absolute nonexistent with the order “Be!”

There is no doubt that this probability is quite false, for there is no sense in addressing something that does not exist! In order to correct it, it is said that what is “non-existent” is known by Allah Almighty Who knows the thing before it comes into being, and that it will become a being at some time.

This is of no use because knowledge of a thing is not right through an address. If you have doubt about that, notice the carpenter who wants to make a chair with the use of tools and equipment. Is it right that he addresses them with this pronouncement, although there is a difference or differences between this example and that?

But what is meant about the order in the said verse, as most Muslims have understood it, is the forming order which expresses the definitive freewill being attached to finding the thing. What is meant by the verse is that the freewill of the most Praised One is followed by something that comes into being, into existence, and that nothing stands in its way. The thing that He ordered and wanted is formed, and it enters into the world of existence without objection or a stop like the obedient subject who is ordered and who obeys. He does not stop or refuse or oppose.

Thus, you become familiar with the difference between the legislative obligatory order, which exists in the Quran and Sunnah, and the formative order. The first is directed to the mature adult rather than to others, let alone those that do not exist. And this differs from the formative order, it is the symbol for the definitive freewill hinging on bringing about what is yet to exist.

Here is the Commander of the Faithful Ali ibn Abu Talib (as) explaining the formative order: “He says to what He wants ‘Be!’ and it is, without a thundering voice or a heard call. Rather, His speech, Glory to Him, is His action; He creates it and forms it, and it was never before existing. Had it been timeless, it would have been a second deity.”²⁶

Two: We choose the second portion and sequence as being non-binding. We commit to a speech that precedes the Quran that is not created. Through it the most Praised One brought about the whole of the Quran, creating it, including the word “Be” which exists in that verse and its likes. The result is that the Quran and all divinely revealed books as well as all His speeches and statements form one single speech that precedes them all. Thus, the sequence is severed when adhering to the principle of a single pronouncement, it is never created.

Three: How can the word “Be” which exists in the said verse and its likes be timeless whereas it connotes the future? So, it has to be time-relevant. This is by token of the most Praised One informing about the future thus: “Our speech when We want something is to say to it ‘Be!’ and it is.” For this reason, late Asharis resorted to the pronouncement “Be!” as an incident, whereas what is timeless implies an eternal, self-relevant meaning.²⁷

Second Evidence: It is His saying:

“Your Guardian-Lord is Allah Who created the heavens and the earth in six days and is firmly

established on the throne (of authority): He draws the night over the day like a veil, each seeking the other in rapid succession. He created the sun, the moon and the stars, (all) governed by laws under His command. Is it not His [sole privilege] to create and to govern? Blessed be Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds!” (Qur’an, 7:54).

Al-Ashari has said, “The creating includes everything which He has created. When He says ‘command’, He made a reference to something else other than all creations. He, thus, pointed out to what we have described as being a command of Allah that is yet to be made. As regarding Allah’s command, it is His speech. Briefly: The most Praised One made a distinction between His order and His creation. Allah’s order is His speech, and this requires Allah’s speech to be uncreated.²⁸

One may conclude with the following about the above. The deduction is based on the “command” in that verse meaning Allah’s speech, and this is not proven. Rather, the evidence indicates that it means something else. How so since the most Praised One has already said this in the same verse:

“... And the stars are subject to His command: Truly (there) are Signs in this for men who are wise” (Qur’an, 16: 12)

and

“Is it not His to create and to govern?” (Qur’an, 7:54).

What is meant by both words (creating and governing) is the same, the first leads to the other. This verse’s goal is to convey the meaning that creating, in the sense of bringing into existence, and His management (of what He creates) are both from Allah, the Praised One. It is not His affair to just create the world and the things then leave them alone and let someone else manage their affairs, so that creating will come from Him while management comes from someone else independently. Rather, all come from Him.

What is meant by creating is finding exact things. And what is meant by governing is the order that prevails on them. It is as though creating is relevant to them and governing is to the conditions that take place in them and the order that rules among them. The evidence to this fact comes from some verses that refer to “governing” or administering after creating.

The most Praised One says,

“Truly your Lord is Allah Who created the heavens and the earth in six days and is firmly established on the throne (of authority), regulating and governing all things. No intercessor (can plead with Him) except with His leave” (Qur’an, 10:3).

The Almighty has also said,

“Allah is He Who raised the heavens with no pillars that you can see; He is firmly established on

the throne (of authority); He has subjected the sun and the moon (to His law)! Each runs (its course) for an appointed term. He regulates affairs, explaining the Signs in detail, so that you may believe with certainty in the meeting with your Lord” (Qur’an, 13:2).

So, what “regulating the affairs” means is the opposite of prohibiting them. Rather, what is meant by the affairs is relevant to creating. Thus, the meaning becomes: creating first then dealing with and administering all coming from the most Praised One, for He is the Creator, the Owner, there is no partner with Him in creating, bringing into being or in managing and administering all affairs.

Third Evidence: It is this verse: “This is nothing but the word of mortals!”

Al-Ashari says, “Whoever claims that the Quran is created makes it the word of mortals, and this is what Allah has objected against the polytheists.”²⁹

One can make this conclusion about it: One who says that the Quran is created means only that it is created for Allah, the most Praised One. Allah created it, inspired it to the Prophet and sent it to him in installments during a period of twenty-three years, making it beyond the might of humans to produce its like even if each of them supports the other for the task.

Yes, the Quran being a creation for Allah, Praise belongs to Him, does not negate that what people recite is created for them. It is commonsense that the letters and sounds which people articulate are created for them. For example, the poem by Imriul-Qais and others: Originally, they were created for their poets, but when recited, their recitation becomes a creation for the readers (or hearers).

What is amazing is that al-Ashari and those who were before and after him did not edit the topic of the dispute. They claimed that if it is said that the “Quran is created,” it is meant that the Quran is made for humans. But necessity rules the opposite of this deduction: How can a Muslim who embraces the Quran and recites this verse by the Creator, Praise belongs to Him,

“This is a Book which We have revealed as a blessing” (Qur’an, 6: 155)

say that the Quran is created for humans? Rather, all Muslims say about the Quran the same: It is what is said by the most Praised One about it. Yet what is recited on their tongues is created for them, so something similar to what Allah revealed becomes created for people. The similar thing created for them is not evidence that the original was created for them. All people combined are unable to create the like of the Quran, but they are able to create (duplicate) its similitude. So, notice and think about it.

Thus, we become aware of the majority of evidences brought about by al-Ashari in his book *Al-Ibana* are incomplete from the standpoint of proof. We do not wish to elaborate and to critique it, and what we have stated suffices.

Something interesting needs to be pointed out here. It is well known about the imam of the Hanbalis that he did not wish to delve into matters in which the “righteous posterity” did not delve because he did not

see any knowledge was there other than that of this posterity. So, what they discussed he, too, would discuss, and what they did not discuss of religious matters, he would see it as an innovation that must be shunned.

Since this issue was not discussed by the posterity, he felt he had no right to discuss it. Innovators are the ones who talk about it. He would not have followed in the latter's footsteps, and it was his duty, according to his principles, to stop and not say a word. Yes, he has been quoted as saying what agrees with stopping, although what we have quoted about him is the opposite, that is, he said, "Whoever claims that the Quran is created is Jahmi, and whoever claims that it is not created is an innovator."

Critics see that this imam of the Hanbali used in his early life to see that researching whether the Quran was created or not as an innovation, *bida* بدعة . But once the ordeal was over, the Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil, who supported him, asked him to state his own view, so he chose to say that the Quran was not created! Despite this, he is never quoted as saying that the Quran is timeless.³⁰

Position of Ahl al-Bayt (as)

The history of the research and of the ordeals through which both parties passed testifies that being extremist in its regard was not for the sake of supporting what is right, for dispelling doubts. Rather, each sect took advantage of that issue to harm its opponents. For this reason, we see the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt (as) prohibiting their followers from delving into this issue.

Al-Rayyan ibn al-Salt asked Imam al-Ridha (as): "What do you say about the Quran?" The Imam (as) said, "It is the speech of Allah. Do not bypass it, and do not seek guidance anywhere lest you should stray."³¹

Ali ibn Salim narrated about his father saying, "I asked as-Sadiq, Jafar ibn Muhammad (as), 'O son of the Messenger of Allah! What would you say about the Quran?' He said, 'It is the speech of Allah, what He has said, the Book of Allah, what He inspired and revealed. It is the Holy Book which falsehood does not approach from before its hands or from behind, the revelation of a Wise, Praiseworthy God'."³²

Sulayman ibn Jafar al-Jafari has said, "I asked Abul-Hassan, Mousa ibn Jafar (as), 'O son of the Messenger of Allah (S)! What do you say about the Quran? Those before us have differed about it. Some folks say it is created, whereas others say it is not.'" He (as) said, "As for me, I do not say in this regard what they say; I only say: It is the speech of Allah."³³

We see how the Imam (as) distanced himself from delving into this matter due to having seen that delving into it was not in the interest of Islam, and that contending with saying that it is the speech of Allah was better to resolve the subject of the dispute. But when they [Ahl al-Bayt (as)] realized the safest situation in this regard was to state their opinion about it, they said that the Creator is Allah, and all others are created (by Him), that the Quran is not the same as the most Praised One, otherwise, a

fusion should be forged between the Revealer and what He reveals. The Quran is not He, so the Quran is unavoidably created.

Muhammad ibn Isa ibn Ubayd al-Yaqtini has narrated saying that Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Mousa al-Ridha (as) wrote some of his followers (Shias) in Baghdad saying, “In the Name of Allah, the most Gracious, the most Merciful. May Allah protect us and your own selves from sedition. If He does, what a great blessing it will be! But if He does not, it is sure perdition. We see that arguing about the Quran is an innovation *بدعة* in which both inquirer and respondent have participated. So, the questioner undertakes what does not belong to him, whereas the one answering him exerts himself while he does not have to. The Creator is none other than Allah, the most Exalted One, the most Great. Everything else is created (by Him). The Quran is the speech of Allah. Do not create a name for it from your own self lest you should be among those who stray. May Allah count us and your own selves among those who fear their Lord in the unknown, and they are apprehensive about the Hour.”³⁴

In reported narratives, there is a reference to the ordeal that the historians recorded. Ahmed ibn Abu Duad wrote saying that during the time of al-Mamoon, the latter wrote about the issue of creating the Quran to the provincial governors of Islamic metropolises. He did so in order to test the *faqih*s and narrators of *hadith* in the issue of the creation of the Quran, to impose on them to penalize anyone who espoused an opinion differently from that of the Mutazilites in this regard.

Al-Mutasim and al-Wathiq succeeded him and implemented his way and policy towards the opponents of the Mutazilites. The ordeal reached its peak against the narrators of *hadith*. Ahmed remained for twenty-eight months under torture but never abandoned his view³⁵.

When Abbasid ruler al-Mutawakkil came to power, he supported the sect of the Hanbalis, keeping his distance from their opponents. It is then that the narrators of *hadith* felt elated, and the ordeal now surrounded those who were in the near past imposing their views through the authority of the sultan.

So, can we regard this debate as being Islamic, as being in agreement with the Quran in commanding to know the truth and to examine it, or was there something else behind all of this? Surely Allah is the One Who knows all facts and what the hearts conceal.

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1. Judge Abdul-Jabbar (d. 415 A.H.), *Sharh al-Usool al-Khamsa*, p. 528; Sayyid al-Shareef, *Sharh al-Mawaqif*, p. 495.
 2. *Sharh al-Mawaqif*, Vol. 1, p. 77. You will come across what the Asharis confirm.
 3. The most Praised One has said, “...and Allah spoke directly to Moses” (Qur’an, 4:164). The most Praised One has also said, “It is not fitting for a man that Allah should speak to him except by inspiration” (Qur’an, 42:51).
 4. *Nahjul-Balagha*, sermon 179, Vol. 2, p. 122 (Abdoh edition).
 5. *Tabatabai*, *Tafsir al-Mizan*, Vol. 2, p. 325 (Beirut edition).
 6. *Nahjul-Balagha*, Sermon 179, Vol. 2, p. 122 (Abdoh edition).
 7. *Sabzawari*, *Sharh Sabzawari’s poem*, p. 190.
 8. *Al-Qawshaji*, *Sharh al-Tajreed*, p. 420.
 9. *Nahj al-Haqq* which is incorporated into *Dalail al-Sidq*, p. 146 (Najaf edition).

10. Ibid.
11. We will provide you in detail a discussion of the generality of His guidance, Praise to Him, at the conclusion of this book's sixth chapter.
12. This is so even if the One desiring it is Allah Almighty, although this is possible; otherwise, it is by way of coercing and obligating, which is negated in His regard, Praise to Him, as you will see in the sixth chapter.
13. Dalaail al-Sidq, Vol. 1, p. 147 (Najaf's edition).
14. Tabatabai, Tafsir Al-Mizan, Vol. 14, p. 250.
15. As regarding the Hanbalis' theory, we will discuss it in the second situation in order to avoid being repetitive.
16. Ahmed ibn Hanbal, Kitab al-Sunnah, p. 49.
17. Al-Ash`ari, Al-Ibana, p. 21. Also refer to Maqalat al-Islamiyyeen (Islamists' articles), p. 321.
18. Al-Ibana, p. 69. On p. 76, he mentioned the names of the people of traditions who advocate that the Quran is not created.
19. Sharh al-Usool al-Khamsa, p. 528.
20. Al-Ibana, pp. 71-72.
21. Risalat al-Tawhid (first edition. About one page of this risala was omitted in later editions. Notice p. 49 of the edition published by the Arab Culture Library.
22. Majmuat al-Rasaail al-Kubra, Vol. 3, p. 97.
23. This is not the first place in which the Asharis attempt to correct the belief of the folks of hadith. Rather, they did so on several occasions in order to produce it in a way accepted by reason.
24. This is due to what takes place by itself having precedence over what is brought about.
25. Al-Ibana, pp. 52-53.
26. Nahjul-Balagha, sermon 186.
27. Dalaail al-Sidq quoting al-Fadl ibn Rozbahan al-Ashari's p. 153, Vol. 1.
28. Al-Ibana, pp. 51-52.
29. Al-Ibana, p. 56.
30. Tarikh al-Mathahib al-Islamiyya (history of Islamic sects), p. 300.
31. Al-Saduq, At-Tawhid, the Book of the Quran: What it is, hadith 2, p. 223.
32. Ibid., Chapter of the Quran, hadith 3, p. 224.
33. Ibid., hadith 5, p. 224.
34. Ibid., hadith 4.
35. Refer to p. 252, Vol. 11 of Siyar Alam al-Nubala. A chapter in this book details what imam Ahmed [ibn Hanbal] went through.

Truthfulness

Muslims (in general) and theologians (in particular) have agreed that "as-Sadiq", the Truthful One, is one of His Attributes although they have differed about how to prove it. What is meant by His being Truthful is that His speech is above the stain of falsehood. Since we have opted to regard "speech" as an operative attribute, truthfulness in speech will be similar to it. But if describing someone as being truthful, it means applying an operative attribute, actually standing through Allah, the Praised One; describing Him is best done likewise.

One can produce the evidence about His truthfulness by saying that lying is abominable by reason, and the most Praised One is above anything which reason regards as an abomination. The evidence is based on goodness and ugliness, this is a matter realized by reason. Regardless of incidents and obstacles, a thing is likewise judged as being good or ugly. This principle is the important matter that divided logicians into two groups.

If we take the positive aspect in that principle, where the truth is, it proves that the most Praised One is truthful. But the Asharis, who deny both what is rationally good or ugly, describe the most Praised One as being truthful. They once seek evidence from falsehood being a deficiency, while it is impossible for Allah to be deficient, and once by saying that the Sharia has told us that He is truthful, yet both evidences are scratched off!

As for the First, had we advocated rational goodness and ugliness, it will be impossible to attribute a shortcoming to Allah, Praised is He, in the aspect of the Self and the action. His own Self is above shortcomings, and so is His action, such as speaking. But if we deny that principle, there is no evidence of the impossibility in finding fault with Allah, Praise belongs to Him, with regard to His actions although applying shortcomings to His own Self is absolutely impossible.

For this reason, the Asharis say that He, Praise belongs to Him, can be unfair, an oppressor, and the same applies to the rest of abominable things, although these things are not done by Him by token of His telling us so.

As for the Second, since proving His truthfulness legitimately depends on the truth in what the Prophet says, and his truthfulness is proven only if Allah, Praise belongs to Him, testifies to his being truthful. If the most Praised One stopped testifying for the truthfulness of the Prophet (peace with him and his progeny), the reversal would then be binding.

For this reason, there has to be a definitive evidence behind the Sharia and the revelation testifying to His being truthful and does not lie, the most Praised One that He is.

There is another evidence to which some Mutazilites pointed out. It is summed up by saying that His lying contradicts the interest of the world because if lies become possible in the speech of the most Exalted One, there will be a removal of faith in His telling us about the conditions of the life hereafter, and this means abandoning countless benefits.

What is the most fitting is obligatory on Him, the most Exalted One, and He cannot violate it. What is meant by its being obligatory is that reason realizes that His position, the most Praised One, in this regard necessitates choosing what is best and leaving everything else.¹

But the evidence is based on the principle set by the fairness criterion of realizing what is good and what is ugly while discarding all things that are incidental or obstacles. It is then that what is best and most fit is realized, or what is suitable and what is not, and it will be realized that what is best and what is good

must be preferred over others. For this reason, there can be no other evidence.

All this applies if we say that His speech is one of the operative attributes. But if we interpret it as being self-speech, as the Asharis have advocated, as you have already come to know, it is not outside the frame of knowledge, freewill, hatred, etc. At that juncture, the truth of His speech will mean that His knowledge is true, and the truth of knowledge cannot be interpreted by any way other than agreeing with the reality. As for the truthfulness of the freewill and of hatred, he does not provide a reason for them. At any rate, truthfulness according to the Asharis will then be one of the self-attributes, not the operative ones.

1. Sharh al-Qawshaji, p. 320.

Wisdom

Wisdom (Al-Hakeem): Above Doing What Should Not Be

The second meaning of wisdom is being above doing what should not be done. In this sense, it is more general than the justice we know of not oppressing and being unfair, etc. The Wise One, in other words, is the One Who does not do what is ugly.

Belief in fixing this attribute for the Creator, the most Exalted One, is based on what is rationally accepted as being good or ugly. The gist of this issue is that there are actions which reason realizes whether they are good or ugly, and it senses that one who is independent by himself is above being characterized by ugliness and by doing what should not be done.

This is the basis for judging His being characterized by wisdom and justice, that He does not oppress or deal unfairly with anyone. From here, we must discuss this issue in the light of reason and the Holy Quran.

What is Rationally Good or Ugly

Those who believe in the Justice of God say that there are actions which reason innately realizes, without seeking assistance from the Sharia, as being good which must be done or ugly above which one should rise. Had the One Who brought the Sharia commanded to do the first and prohibited the doing of the second, He would be revealing what reason understands and to which it guides. The Sharia is not supposed to reverse the issue by labeling as good what reason deems to be ugly or regards as ugly

what it rules as being good.

The Asharis have said that reason is not to judge about things being good or ugly, and a thing is not characterized as being good or ugly by itself before a text from the Sharia saying so. For this reason, nothing is good except what the Sharia regards as good, and nothing is ugly except what it labels as such. Injustice is ugly because the Sharia prohibits it. Justice is good because the Sharia commands its doing. Had this been reversed and justice been made ugly while injustice is made good, it should have been as it has decreed.

Those who advocate what is rationally good or ugly divided actions, in as far as being characterized by them, into three types:

First: Actions that by themselves completely justify goodness or ugliness, and this is called self-goodness and ugliness, such as justice and injustice. Justice, due to being so, can only be good always. Whenever it is found, its doer is praised and is regarded as doing something good. Likewise, injustice, as such, can only be ugly, and whenever one who commits it is found, he is held in contempt and is labeled as being a wrongdoer. It is impossible for justice to be ugly and injustice to be good.

Second: Actions do not form a complete reason behind it either. Rather, it requires being characterized by them, so much so that had an action and its doer been separated from each other, it may either be good, such as highly respecting a friend for being as such, or ugly, such as humiliating him. But there is no objection to glorifying being held in contempt because a label fits it, such as its being the cause for oppressing a third person, or disrespect becoming laudable when the label applies to it, such as its being a cause for salvation.

The example is not confined to both of them. Truthfulness and telling lies are also the same. Truthfulness that results in harming the society is ugly, and telling lies that saves an innocent human being is good. Here, contrarily to justice and injustice, justice, as such, must not be described as being ugly, while injustice, due to being oppressive, is described as being good.

Third: One wherein there is neither cause for it by itself nor a need to be characterized by either. Rather, it follows the eventual entities and labels that apply to it, and it is like beating: It is good for disciplining but bad for hurting.

This is common in circulation among them. The desired objective behind this research is that it has been made clear that there are actions which reason comprehends, if it reviews them, regardless of the entities that affect them. They are good and their doers are praised, or they are ugly and their doers must be held in contempt. And we do not claim that every action falls within this framework.

In other words, the dispute between both groups swings between partial positive and total negative. Those who believe in the concept of Justice of God advocate the first, whereas the Asharis advocate the other.

About Applying Labels of Goodness and Ugliness

There is no doubt that what is good and what is ugly carries one meaning. The talk revolves round whether a thing is good or ugly, and it varies according to the sources. The criteria for what is good and what is ugly have been stated, and we here state some of them.

1. What agrees or disagrees with nature. The good scene, since it suits nature, is regarded as being good. The frightening scene, since nature rejects it, is regarded as being ugly. Similar to it is tasty food and soft voice, they both are good. The bitter medicine and the braying of the donkey are ugly. Goodness and ugliness in this criterion is not the subject of research and dispute. Moreover, they cannot withstand and be sustained due to the differences in nature.

2. What agrees or disagrees with personal interests and norms. One killing his enemy is something good, since it agrees with the killer's personal goals. But it is ugly for the friends and family of the killed person because it opposes their personal objectives and interests. This is with regard to personal objectives and interests.

As regarding the sort/quality field, justice safeguards the society's system and the type's interests, so it is good. Since injustice undermines order and opposes the type's interest, it is ugly. This, too, is outside the field of research between the Adlis (those who believe in the Justice of God) and the Asharis, for personal interests are not always right in describing an action as being good or ugly due to the differences in personal objectives and interests, as you have already come to know.

An action, such as killing someone, may be good according to an individual or a group while being ugly according to others. The research is about what is good or ugly by itself that does not change from some people to others when they are attributed, or from one generation to another. Rather, it is an absolutely fixed judgment for an action.

3. As regarding type interests, such as a system being kept or undermined, although they always portray an action as being good or ugly, it is not right to apply the terms of good or ugly in both of these situations. This is so because what is meant by the "self" is the same action, regardless of looking at others, obligates reason to recognize it as being good or ugly.

The matter is not the same when describing an action as being good or ugly for the quality pros and cons. These objectives, which are outside the truth of the actions, have something to do with reason rationalizing or describing. For this reason, such a matter must be outside the scope of dispute. If the Asharis admit the goodness of justice and the ugliness of injustice from this standpoint, they still cannot be regarded as being in agreement with the Adlis.

A thing that brings perfection or causes a shortcoming to one's self, such as knowledge or ignorance, the first beautifies it while the second shames it. But there is nothing wrong with judging something as

being good or ugly in this sense, and it is not a point of discussion. I do not think that there is anyone on the face of earth who denies knowledge, courage and eloquence as being good, whereas ignorance, cowardice and ineloquence are an indication of a shortcoming and ugliness.

These three criteria, if we suppose they are criteria for being adorned with goodness or damned with ugliness, are outside the precincts of this research. Rather, the research is between the Adlis and others in the next fourth criterion.

4. Actions that obligate praise for one who acts upon them are regarded by people of reason as being good, and if they incur denunciation, they are regarded by them as being ugly. This is done by observing the deed itself as it is without adding anything else to it and without noticing that it contains a personal or quality benefit, so reason is independent in judging its goodness and in the need for it, or it deems it ugly and that it must be abandoned.

If you will, you may say that if actions falls within the frame of the human reason without difference among individuals, and regardless of anything else other than the action itself, reason will find it described as good and a candidate for praise, or vice versa. For example, if goodness is rewarded with goodness, it is deemed to be good, but if it is rewarded with abuse, it rules that it is ugly.

In issuing a ruling such as this, reason does not observe anything other than the topic itself without imagining its being reform or corruption. The discussion of what is good and what is ugly by itself aims only at this category.

The three earlier categories are outside the scope of this research. Also, ordinary judgment of what is good or ugly, such as lauding a soldier who comes out wearing his military uniform, while deeming a scholar coming out wearing unsuitable outfit as being ugly. These, too, are outside the scope of this research.

One may misunderstand that judging something as being good or ugly is done according to a fifth criterion which is: What is good is something which deserves rewards from Allah, whereas what is ugly deserves His punishment. But this, too, is outside the scope of this research. Brahmins, who follow no legislative code, let alone believing in reward and punishment in the Hereafter, have discussed the roots of judging something as being good or ugly. So, how can this be the criterion of the research?

Yes, it has assumed this feature based on those who want to deny what is good and what is ugly. This is done in the excuse that the reward and penalty for an action is outside the scope of reason and is inside that of a legislative code.

From the above, one can understand what it implies. Yet in order to provide more explanations in identifying the point of dispute between the Asharis and the Adlis, we would like to produce the following explanation.

Many of those who look for rational labeling of what is good and what is ugly render the goodness, justice, benevolence, ugliness of injustice and aggression, by saying that the first contains a public interest, whereas the second also contains abuse. Because of these results, a generalization has been made of recognizing the beauty of the first and the ugliness of the second for everything.

But you have already come to know that the criterion of the research is broader than that, that the matter focuses on noticing the deed itself while overlooking its consequences and outcomes, does reason realize its goodness or ugliness? Does reason praise the benevolence of a benevolent person while denouncing rewarding a benevolent person with abuse? Does reason label as ugly the over-burdening of someone? Does reason label as good the work of a worker according to an agreement?

The discussion is on this level. It is not by looking at objectives and interests, be they individual or social.

Those who advocate rational labels of what is good and what is bad say that every rational person has the ability to make a distinction. He inwardly finds some actions as being good and others as being ugly, and these rulings stem from the essence of the rationalizing force and the exemplary human identity.

The first person who liberated the point of dispute according to the way which we have decided is the critic (Abdul-Razzaq) al-Lahiji in his works of logic. The most clear evidence of the accuracy of his research is that the goal behind submitting this issue (for discussion) is to come to know His actions, the most Praised One, and whether or not reason can explore a description of His actions, that what is good according to reason, or what is ugly, is as such according to Allah Almighty. Such an exploration cannot take place except when the criterion in labeling as good or as ugly by observing the same action as it is.

For example, there is no sense in researching what is good and what is ugly through the previous criterion of suitability or contradiction to nature, or whether it agrees or disagrees with an objective, or whether it safeguards or undermines system and society. Otherwise, the objective for which this issue was submitted, which is getting to know His actions, Praise belongs to Him, will be nil and void.

Are Rational Good and Ugly Things Common?

It may seem that some men of wisdom as well as logicians give the impression that judging something, as being good or ugly through reason is something that is commonly agreed upon according to the views of rational people, and it is called “commendable”.

Our chief mentor says the following in his *Ishaaraat* book: “As for the celebrate, they include views labeled as commendable, and we may specifically apply the term ‘common’ to them because they stand on something other than fame. These are opinions if a man who is left with his abstract mind, whim and sense, without being disciplined by accepting their issues and recognizing them. His strong thinking did not incline to judge due to many particularities. If he did not seek in their regard the human nature of mercy, timidity, pride, dignity, etc, he would not rule that his reason, whim or sense would judge according to them.

For example, we rule that robbing a man of his money is ugly, lying is ugly, so one must not do it. From this same type, there are many which people can consider. The Sharia has classified many things as being ugly, such as killing an animal (not for food or to avoid harm) due to the instinct of kindness, and most people are kind.

None of these are obligated by naive thinking. Were one created with a perfect mind but did not hear anyone disciplining him, nor does he surrender to a psychological or moral impulse, he will not issue a ruling about any of these issues. Rather, he can ignore it and stop at a limit. He will not rule that the whole is greater than the portion.”

He adds saying, “What is common knowledge is either an obligation or a reformatory disciplining, and it is that with which the divine legislations agree. As for manners and tempers, be they inductions or terms, they are either absolute or according to folks who have mastered a profession or followed a creed.”¹

Here you can see that the main mentor regards it a common issue to consider robbing someone of his money as being ugly, and that only rational men realize it. Had man been left alone to follow his reason and was not disciplined about accepting rational issues; he would not deem it as ugly.

The critic al-Tusi agrees with him when he explains the signs.

One can resign that *qiyas*, analogy, is divided into five types:

1. Evidential
2. Polemic
3. Oratorical
4. Poetic
5. Sophistical

The first among them is comprised of certain propositions the principles of which are six:

1. First Principles
2. Contemplations
3. Empirical
4. Intuitive
5. Recurrences
6. Innate Things

As for the second, I mean the dialectical syllogism, it is comprised of what is common and what is taken for granted, whether they are regarded as such by everyone or by a specific group.

Thereupon, the celebrate from among the principles of debate are contrasted by demonstrative syllogism. If rational criteria of good and ugly are among the celebrate, they are listed under the polemic syllogism and are known to be realized only on account of fame.

Had man been left alone for his abstract reason, whim and senses, without being disciplined about accepting their issues, he would not rule based on them. Denial of the criteria of rational good and ugly must be rejected and so must rational evidences in their regard, and those who advocate acceptance of reason do not adopt this.

Moreover, making them celebrate, getting them out of the demonstrative syllogism and into the dialectic syllogism nullifies all rulings and consequences that are based on advocating reason, as we explained. Based on this, judging something as being good or ugly is not evidential, what results from it cannot be used as evidence. Rather, it is regarded to be among the celebrate about which views of the men of wisdom agree. It is quite possible the men of wisdom agree against them. In that case, what is good becomes ugly and vice versa.

So, if you say that the chief mentor made the celebrate more general among the principles of debate, incorporating into them the first principles. He says at the beginning of his statement, "As for the celebrate, they include views labeled as commendable, and we may specifically apply the term 'common' to them because they stand on things other than fame." I would like to say this:

What you have stated is accurate. For him, the celebrate are more general than certitudes and others, so much so that even the first principles have two considerations: They are generally recognized by people, so they are regarded as being celebrate. In contrast to this category, there is another category for the celebrate which is: certitude. Mere reason hesitates to judge them, but most people recognize them, and they are labeled as "commendable opinions." This category may be set aside under the celebrate label.

The celebrate are said to share the meaning according to people's recognition of them, and they are of two types: certitudes and non-certitudes. But the mentor and those who follow him have regarded labeling what is good and what is ugly to be under the second category, and this requires denial of the rational categorization of what is rationally good and what is ugly as well as the rulings built on it, so consider.

What Criterion for Judging Actions as Being Good or Ugly?

If the object of dispute is what we have stated, i.e. the mind realizes an action as being good or ugly by looking at it while overlooking its consequences, one would wonder: How can reason judge goodness

and ugliness, and what is the criterion for the judgment? The criterion for reason to judge is that it finds some actions as being in agreement with man's higher side and exemplary facet in human existence, and that they do not agree with each other.

If you will, you may say that he realizes that some actions vest perfection on a chosen living being, whereas some others see shortage in him, so it judges the first to be good, and that one should be adorned by it, deeming the other as being ugly and must be abandoned. If natural instinct, as we stated about criteria, generalizes this meaning, i.e. the higher nature in man, this meaning would be incorporated into the first category.

Explanation: Men of wisdom have divided reason into theoretical and practical. The second teacher has said, "The theoretical ones are those about which man may get to know that which man may do, whereas the practical ones are those that inform us what man can do with his own freewill."

Wise Sabzawari said this in explaining it: "Theoretical reason and the practical one can rationalize, but the theoretical is concerned about pure sciences not related to actions such as: Allah is One existent, His Attributes are the same as He is, and the like.

The practical one is concerned about sciences relevant to actions such as: 'Relying on God is good,' 'Acceptance, surrender and perseverance are commendable.' This reasoning is the one used in the science of ethics. Both methods of reasoning are not contradictory, nor do they represent hidden meanings. Rather, they are two faces for one and the same coin: articulate people."²

Just as there are theoretical issues in theoretical wisdom that end at commonsense issues, analogies would otherwise have become infertile and unproductive, so is the case with practical wisdom. Unknown issues cannot be known except when they end at necessary issues; otherwise, man would not know anything about issues of practical wisdom. Just as reason innately realizes commonsense issues in theoretical wisdom, it thus realizes commonsense issues in practical wisdom innately without the need for any other imagery.

For example, belief in all theoretical issues must end at a case where antitheses are not present; they are removed, so much so that if belief in them is removed, no issue can be believed at all. It is, therefore, called the "mother issue," such as certitude: It is the belief that the angles of a triangle equal two right angles.

This does not happen unless it is preceded by the impossibility in believing in the opposite of this issue, that is, it does not equal them. Otherwise, if the opposite can be believed, relative certitude will not take place. For this reason, the word of the men of wisdom has agreed about applying evidence to theoretical issues is done if the evidence reaches the "mother issue" referred to above.

In the light of this explanation, we say this: Just as theoretical issues in the theoretical mind are commonsense, preliminary, which it grasps, so is the case with the issues that are not clear in the

practical mind. They must end at preliminary and clear issues according to reason, so as if belief in these issues is removed in the practical wisdom, there can be no belief in any of their issues.

Among the commonsense issues in the practical mind is the one about rationally fixed issues of what is clearly good and what is ugly for a host of issues, such as our saying that “Justice is good”, “Injustice is ugly”, “Rewarding goodness with goodness is good” and “Rewarding goodness with evil is ugly.”

These are preliminary issues in practical wisdom, and practical reason realizes them innately and while observing the issues themselves. In the light of believing in them, it is easy to believe what is based on them in the field of practical mind from rulings that are not commonsense, whether they are connected to manners first, or to home management second, or to urban policies third, which are discussed in the practical wisdom.

In order to bring an example for it, the ethical scholar rules that it is mandatory to honor parents, teachers and those who do us favors. This is so because honoring is an issue of rewarding goodness with goodness, something which is good by itself, while insulting them is one of the issues of rewarding goodness with ugliness, which by itself is ugly.

One who researches home management will rule that marital duties must be carried out by both sides, and that falling short of so doing is ugly. This is so because carrying them out is acting upon the marriage covenant, whereas lagging behind them violates this covenant. The first is good by itself and the second is ugly by itself.

The sociologist who looks into the rights of the ruler and government on the society rules that the taxes must be equivalent to individuals' incomes. This is so because abandoning this restriction means doing the subjects injustice, which is ugly by itself.

You can measure on this whatever researches reach you in practical wisdom, whether they are due to the individual (ethics), or to the small society (the home), or to the big society (the corps politique). Everything that is said about them and researched by researchers, since it is one of the practical mind's affairs, must be ruled as being either positive or negative, right or wrong, based on the obvious issues in the field of that mind.

Up to here, we have come to conclude that the unclear rulings must end, starting from the field of both minds (the theoretical and the practical) up to commonsense rulings that are realized without any difficulty. This is so in order to avoid the turn and the sequences on which scholars of logic and wisdom relied in the first section, that is, theoretical wisdom, and the evidence is one and applies to all.

If you come to know all of what we have stated, the talk will fall in another matter: determining the criterion for reason realizes the soundness of commonsense issues or their being false in the field of both minds. So let us say the following.

The criterion in the field of theoretical mind is the issue being in agreement with or without its formation. The mind realizes innately that the presence of two antitheses cannot take place on the outside, and that it cannot be judged that something is present while at the same time it cannot be judged that it does not exist. Such is realized without the need for an experiment or induction.

The criterion in the practical mind is realizing the agreement between the issue and its suitability for the exemplary side of man, not the animal one, or its opposition thereto.

Man has an exemplary instinct with which he is distinguished from animals. He finds some issues suitable for or contradictory to that high side, so he describes what is suitable as good and that it must be done, describing its opposite as being ugly and must be avoided. He does not realize the issues with these two descriptions only for his own person or for a particular type of humans or for all humans; rather, he realizes the goodness or ugliness for every rational existent having the freedom to choose, whether he falls under the umbrella of humanity or is outside it.

This is so because the basis for his judgment of one of these two descriptions of the same issue is as it is, without any particularity for the realizing individual. He realizes that justice is good with everyone and from everyone, that injustice is likewise ugly. He does not apply his judgment with either of them to a particular time or century.

Up to now, the two matters that play a role in rationally judging something as good or as ugly have been made clear, and either of them must not be confused with the other because the first is an introduction to the other; these are:

A. All issues in the field of reason are rendered to commonsense in order to avoid what must be avoided.

B. Clarifying that reason criterion identifies such issues as being commonsense when it comes to reason.

It has become clear that one who advocates rational goodness and ugliness for their own selves needs not prove what he adopts. Also, one advocates that antitheses do not meet, and that they are out of place. What is amazing is that the men of wisdom and the logicians have agreed that theoretical issues in the theoretical mind must end to be commonsense issues. Otherwise, the criteria would be useless, and sequence will replace deduction.

But they overlooked applying this principle to the practical mind's aspect and did not divide the practical issue into ideological and commonsense, or theoretical and necessary. How so since deduction and definitiveness in unclear issues in the field of practical mind cannot be done except when the mind arrives at issues that are clear in this field?

You have already come to know that the issues submitted in home and family environments, which are

labeled home management, or the issues discussed in the world of politics and urban management, are not equally clear? Rather, they have degrees and levels (of clarity). Mind cannot reach definitiveness in all practical issues unless there are clearly commonsense issues on which unknown practical issues are based, so that definitiveness is applied to them and ambiguity is removed from them. For this reason, we do not have to expand in submitting evidences for those who advocate what is good and what is ugly, and we do not mention except few of them.

Just as they have overlooked dividing the issues in the practical wisdom into both parts, they thus overlooked explaining what the criterion is for the mind to realize the accuracy of some issues or their being false in that field. In the statements of logicians, they explain the criterion and the standard in incomplete matters to which one who reviews books of logic can refer.

Evidences of Advocates of Rational Judgments of What is Good and What is Ugly

First Evidence: It is referred to by the critic al-Tusi when he said, "... It is due to their absence if they are legitimately fixed."³ In other words, if we say that what is good and what is ugly are proven through the Sharia, this will necessitate their being not proven by the Sharia, too.

Explanation: If goodness and ugliness are judged by the mind, when the mind is independent in realizing that truthfulness is good while lying is ugly, there is no confusion about what the Legislator bids and forbids being good and ugly respectively. This is due to reason judging that lying is ugly, and the Legislator does not commit what is ugly, nor can it be imagined that he commits it.

But if the mind is not independent in doing so, when the Legislator commands something or prohibits it, or if he tells us that being truthful is good while telling lies is ugly, it does not befit us to be definite that he is truthful in his speech till we believe in its contexts. This is so because there is a possibility the legislator is not telling the truth in its regard, or in telling it.

Telling lies, according to the presumption, is yet to be proven to be ugly. Even if the legislator says that he does not lie, we are not sure that he is truthful even while conveying such information. So, it is mandatory, as al-Ashari should have advocated, that one cannot rule something as being good, neither according to reason nor to the Sharia.

If you may, you can say that had reason not been independent about some actions being good and others being ugly, such as telling the truth and lying, and if Allah, the most Praised One, tells us through His prophets that such an action is good or ugly, we would not have been definitive about His speech to say that there is likelihood He is not telling us the truth.

The man of virtue, al-Qawshaji al-Ashari, responded to this reasoning by saying, "We do not make bidding and forbidding as two evidences for what is good and what is ugly (respectively) so what has

been said above would be stated. Rather, we judge something as being good when the action is connected to bidding and to praise, whereas ugliness is when it is connected to forbidding and denunciation.”⁴

One may resign that the topic falls once in the name and in the term, so it is not right to say that what took place is connected to bidding and praise is good, and what is prohibited and denounced is ugly. Knowing this does not hinge except on hearing them from the legislator.

The other issue is that labeling what is actually good or ugly also falls with the legislator. This is not explored from mere hearing that the bidding and forbidding are relevant to something for it is possible the legislator may be sporting in bidding and forbidding. If he says that he is not sporting, this does not prove the negation of the possibility of his sporting in his actions and speech due to the probability of his being jesting or lying in his speech.

For this reason, there must be something among the rational realization the realizing of goodness and ugliness of which does not hinge on anything, and that reason will be independent in grasping it, which is: Justice is good and injustice is ugly, truthfulness is good and lying is ugly, so the mind may be independent in it, that what the legislator judged is true in his words.

It will then be fixed that what is relevant to the matter is good according to the Sharia, and what is connected to prohibition is held by the Sharia as ugly. This is the objective of the critic al-Tusi, that is, had it not been for the independence of the mind in some actions, nothing at all would have been fixed as good or ugly.

Second Evidence: It is referred to also by the critic al-Tusi when he said, “... The counteracting would have then been valid,”⁵ that is, in determining what is good and what is ugly.

Explanation: When determining what is good and what is ugly, the legislator has the right to deem as good or as ugly whatever reason judges as being as such. Therefore, this is obligatory to deem benevolence as ugly and abuse as good to be by necessity false. Man’s conscience judges that it is not right for a doer of good to be denounced or a doer of evil to be praised.

The Commander of the Faithful (peace with him) has said, “The doer of good and the doer of bad should not have the same status with you.”⁶ In this statement, the Imam aims at waking up the conscience of his governor, and he does not say it as something new about which the governor was heedless.

Third Evidence: Had goodness and ugliness been legislated, the Brahmans and atheists, who reject divinely revealed legislations, would not have judged through them. They pass a judgment based on reason. Materialists and atheists who spread in broad countries from the east of the earth to its west reject such legislation and religion from its very foundation, recognizing the goodness of some actions and the ugliness of others.

For this reason, they tempt world nations to submit deceptive concepts through their vile propaganda, such as support for reconciliation and world peace, preserving human rights, caring for the prisoners and detainees, renouncing racial discrimination, up to the list of what the human taste and reason appreciate in all circles.

They submit these concepts so they may reach through them their personal goals and interests. Had these concepts been unacceptable by humans in general, the advocates of materialism and atheism in the world would not have used them.

The conclusion is that there are actions in the goodness of which nobody doubts, whether the Sharia states their goodness or not. Also, there are actions that everyone finds as being ugly, whether their ugliness is mentioned by the Sharia or not. For this reason, if a rational person, who has never heard of divinely revealed legislations, nor does he know anything about rulings, grew up in the deserts, his mind being empty of all doctrines, is given the option to either be truthful and thus be given one dinar, or to lie and will be given a dinar, while there is no harm on him in either case, he will prefer to tell the truth over lying. Had instinct not judged truthfulness as being good and lying as being ugly, he would not have distinguished one from the other, and he would have always chosen truthfulness.

This shows that reason has the ability to judge and decide matters that are rendered to the individual and to the society, so it judges that obedience to a benevolent guardian is good and disobedience of him is ugly, that the doer of goodness and that of evil do not occupy the same status, and the like.

Fourth Evidence: Had what is good and what is ugly been judged according to hearing (about them), Allah Almighty would not have deemed anything as being ugly. Had it been so, He would not have deemed it ugly that miraculous acts are performed by liars. Judging this as being permissible closes the door of the prophet's knowledge. Any prophet who brought a miracle shortly after claiming Prophetic mission could not be believed while saying it was permissible for a miracle to be performed by a liar in his claim.

This false result is one of the most important and prominent outcomes of denying the principle. Thus did they close the door of knowing a Prophetic mission.

What is amazing is that al-Fadl ibn Rozbahan tried to respond to this evidence by saying, "A miracle is not done by liars not only because this is rationally ugly, it is due to Allah not doing things like that; it is normally impossible. So, the door of knowing the prophets will not be closed because ordinary knowledge judges it impossible to come up."⁷

One may resign that: Where did he have this knowledge from, that is, that Allah does not let a miracle be performed by a liar? Had belief hinged on bringing it about, those who belied the Prophetic mission of Noah, or those before or after him, would have been excused for having denied the prophet's mission. This is so because this habit is not fixed with them. Knowledge of it takes place when seeing a miracle being performed at the hands of the truthful person rather than those of the liars is a repeated

occurrence.

It can be said that the conclusion that Allah does not permit a liar to produce a miracle must be based on a reference. If the reference is reason, the Asharis regard it as being detached. If it is due to hearing, it is presumed that the legislator may be lying in his claim. Rather, there is no hearing prior to a proof for a prophet's message.

The conclusion of the research is: One who denies what is good and what is ugly denies commonsense, and there is no need to speak to him because the dispute cuts off when it reaches necessary introductions, and such folks dispute about them.

I wonder, if reason does not judge that there is no obligation to do what is beyond one's capacity, and that it deems it permissible that Allah, Glory to Him, prohibits His servant from doing something, creates in it a necessity then He punishes him for it, so, say: Ha! What matter is realized by reason?!

It has been said that a poet and a carpenter got together for a debate. The carpenter said, "Why do you advocate that Allah commands His servants to do what is beyond their ability?" The poet kept silent. He was asked, "Why are you silent?" He said, "I intended by debating with him to obligate him to say that He commands what is beyond one's ability; but if he adheres to it without feeling ashamed of it, what should I obligate him about?"

Thus you come to know about the weakness of what Abul-Hassan al-Ashari mentions in his *Lama* book, and here is its text:

"If someone says: 'Should Allah cause the children pain in the Hereafter?' it will be said to him, 'He, the most Exalted One, has the right to do so, and He will be fair if He does it.'" He goes on to add, "And His letting the believers suffer is not seen as an ugly deed which He does, while He permits the unbelievers to enter the Gardens of Bliss. Rather, we say that He does not do that because He has already informed us that He punishes the unbeliever, and it is not possible that He lies when He tells us something."⁸

Asharis' Evidences for Denying Rational Goodness and Ugliness

First Evidence: Allah is the Owner of everything, He does in His kingdom whatever He pleases.

In his argument, al-Ashari sought evidence saying, "The proof that everything He does He has the right to do is: He is the Owner, the Subduer Who is not owned; none is above Him; none is there to command or prohibit Him, nor is there anyone present with Him who draws drawings for Him, signing orders for Him. If all of this is as such, nothing ugly comes out of Him. If there is anything ugly, it comes out of us because we violate the limit that He drew for us; we do what we are not supposed to. Since the Creator is not a slave or one who works for someone else, nothing ugly comes of Him. If He says that telling lies is ugly because He finds it as such, it will be said to him: Yes. Had He found it to be good, it would have been good, and if He commanded it, nobody would object to Him.

“If they say that it is possible that He lies, just as you find it possible that He commands the telling of lies, it will be said to them: Not everything that is possible is liable for Him to command or that He is described by it.”⁹

The resigns about the above are as follows:

Firstly, we would like to ask the Ashari mentor this question: If the most Praised One tormented in the hereafter al-Ashari's child, although a child is innocent and has committed no sin, and if the Ashari himself sees it in the hereafter with his own eyes, will he see it as justice and as a good deed? Or will he find that particular actions, out of his own conscience, to be repugnant?

Likewise, if al-Ashari is dealt with in the same way his child was dealt with, although he is a believer, will he accept it in the depths of his soul and see it as fairness, that he is not being wronged, in the pretext that Allah, Praise belongs to Him, is the Owner of the domain and He fares with His domain as He pleases? Or would al-Ashari judge otherwise?

Secondly, there is no doubt that the most Praised One is the King of the domain, and He can do anything, as you have come to know, be it good or ugly. His ability, in general, covers anything, and there is no doubt about it. But the rational judgment says that such an action is ugly, yet it is done by someone who is wise; this is not to limit His kingdom and ability.

This is what counts in untying the knot of the Asharis who claim that the judgment of reason, its judging the actions of the most Praised One, is a sort of intrusion into the affairs of the Lord of the Worlds, but the truth is something else.

Explanation: Due to experience, or due to rational evidences, reason unveils the laws that prevail over nature. It also unveils the mathematical laws. If reason says that every pair is divided into two equal parts, is there a possibility that by doing so reason or nature should impose its own judgment? Or will it be said that nature carried that law, that reason discovered and explained it?

If this is the difference between imposing a judgment and discovering it in the natural world, let the difference be between realizing it as a good deed or as an ugly one, between any action it undertakes and that which it does not. Its imposition of a judgment on Allah, Praise belongs to Him, is an imposition that limits the expanse of His ability, will and action.

Reason here is not a judge, and it does not impose anything on Allah, Praise belongs to Him. Rather, by looking at Allah Almighty and His Attributes, which include perfection and independence, this reveals that one who has such attributes, especially wisdom, cannot do anything ugly, nor does he undermine anything that is good.

In other words, reason reveals that one who is characterized with all perfection, who is independent of anything, cannot do anything ugly. This is so because there is deterrence, he has no reason. This

abstention from doing what is ugly does not mean that it is unable to do it, nor does it negate the most Exalted One being able to do it, nor does it negate his option in doing what is good and abandoning what is ugly. His doing something is by choice, and so is the case with not doing it.

This is the conclusion arrived at by those who believe in the Justice of Allah, who say that ugliness does not apply to Him. This does not mean restricting what He does by reason. Rather, because Allah is wise, He has mandated it on Himself neither to violate what is good, nor to do what is ugly. The role of reason here is only to disclose, to clarify, by looking at His attributes and wisdom.

Briefly, His actions, Praise belongs to Him, while keeping in mind that His Might is general, is not chaotic and free of everything negative or positive, nor is it restrictively imposed on Him, Praise belongs to Him, by the reason factor. Rather, it is a reality, a fact discovered by reason just as reason discovered the laws prevailing over nature and the cosmos.

Imagine that His action, Praise belongs to Him, is free of every restriction and limit in the pretext of safeguarding the Honor of Allah, Praise belongs to Him, and due to the expanse of His omnipotence. This is almost the same as false entrapment, for safeguarding His omnipotence is not the same as His actions being above any restriction and condition.

Contemplating on what we have already stated, it becomes obvious how weak the argument of all those who advocate the negation of what is rationally good or bad is. There is no harm in pointing out to some of their evidences which their scholars who succeeded Abul-Hassan al-Ashari have indicated.

Second Evidence: Had there been a need for determining what is good and what is ugly, there would have been no dispute.

They have said: Had knowledge of the goodness of what is good and the ugliness of what is ugly been necessary, there would have been no dispute about the difference between it and the knowledge that the one is half the two, but the latter is false according to conscience.

Critic al-Tusi responded saying, "Variations in sciences is possible due to variations in visions."¹⁰

Explanation: Necessary sciences may vary because of the variations in imagining their ends. In the logic industry, it is decided that truisms have levels. The preliminaries have a higher level than the observations, the latter have a higher level than experimental things, the latter have a higher level than intuitionism, the latter has a higher level than *traditionalia permissa*, and the latter has a higher level than instincts. The restriction in this regard is: If something cannot be believed except through imagining both its ends, it has a higher level than others, such as the preliminaries¹¹, and so on.

Had what the Asharis stated, with regard to consistency, become a must, what is relevant to the senses cannot be among what is positive.

Briefly, positive sciences, despite their abundance, are not on one style. Rather, they have levels and

degrees. This is sensed by man if he applies his sciences and convictions. Therefore, there is no objection to differences in some necessary sciences due to certain motivations. They are on the level of imagining that judging something as being good or ugly restricts His authority, the most Praised One. For this reason, the Asharis rejected this science which is necessary to maintain the generality of His authority, that of the most Exalted One.

Third Evidence: Had goodness and ugliness been rational, they would not have changed.

Had goodness and ugliness been rational, they would not have changed, that is, what is good cannot become ugly, and what is ugly cannot become good, and the latter is false. Telling a lie can be good, while telling the truth can cause something ugly, such as if the lie results in saving a prophet from annihilation while telling the truth can cause him to perish.

Had lying been ugly due to its own ugliness, it cannot be a must, nor can it be good if it serves the interest of protecting the blood of a prophet from the oppression of an oppressor who seeks to kill him.¹²

Al-Tusi the critic has responded by saying, "... And it is the committing of the lesser ugly thing while there is the possibility of saving someone."¹³

Its explanation is this: As ugly as telling a lie is in this picture, abandoning the saving of the prophet's life is much uglier. Thus, reason judges that the lesser ugly thing should be committed in order to avoid the committing of what is the ugliest. Yet one can get rid of telling a lie through insinuation.

Briefly, saving the prophet's life is better than the goodness of the truth, while abandoning doing it is uglier than lying. Therefore, it is better to commit the lesser ugly thing, which is lying, because it serves a great interest, rather than tell the truth.

Add to the above is that the evidence is based on lying being ugly and truthfulness being good, similarly to oppression being ugly and justice being good, is entitative; these do not change. As regarding what has already been said about the actions, in as far as goodness and ugliness are concerned, they are of various types.

Some of them are those where the action is a complete cause behind one of them. So, its goodness or ugliness is not changed by eventualities such as the goodness of benevolence and the ugliness of wrongdoing. And some of them are those in which one of them requires the doing of another. It mandates goodness as long as no other label is subjected to it, and so is the case with the aspect of ugliness.

It has already been indicated that the goodness of truthfulness and the ugliness of lying are of this type. And there are others that cannot be a cause, nor do they mandate either of them, such as beating, whether it is a penalty or (deliberate) inflicting of harm.

Up to here, we have come up with this outcome: There are actions where reason independently judges

as being good or ugly, judging them with help from the Sharia. It sees their goodness and ugliness in the absolute sense in all doers, without being exclusively belonging to the Creator or to the creature. We have already indicated the criterion of its judgment, which is: the suitability or aversion of an action for or to the supreme One according to which He created man.

To say that something is rationally good or ugly takes place by saying that man is a doer enjoying the power to choose. As regarding saying that he is forced in his actions, researching them is negated due to the negation of its subject because no forced actions can be described as being good or ugly according to reason.

Since the Asharis depict man as being a forced doer, their statement mandates the negation of rational goodness and ugliness. You will come to know how man is a selective doer, he is not forced. You will be familiar with the evidences produced by the Asharis for their compulsion claim.¹⁴

Goodness and Ugliness According to the Holy Quran

Contemplation on the verses of the Holy Quran provides that it takes it for granted that reason judges things as being good or ugly outside the frame of inspiration, then it commends to do what is good and prohibits the doing of what is ugly.

The most Praised One says,

“Allah commands justice, good deeds and liberality to kith and kin, and He forbids all shameful deeds, injustice and rebellion: He instructs you so that you may receive admonishment.” 16:90

“Say: The things that my Lord has truly forbidden are: shameful deeds, whether open or secret; sins and trespasses against truth or reason (and) the assigning of partners to Allah, something for which He has given no authority, and saying things about Allah of which you have no knowledge.” 7:33

“...He allows them as lawful what is good (and pure) and prohibits them from doing what is bad (and impure).” 7: 157

“When they do anything that is shameful, they say, ‘We found our fathers doing so,’ and ‘God commanded us thus.’ Say: ‘No, Allah never commands what is shameful: Do you say about Allah what you do not know?’” 7:28

These verses clearly indicate that there are matters that are described as being good, shameful, repugnant, unjust as well as things that are described as commendable. They do so before the matter in their regard hinges on a command to bid or forbid them, and that man finds attribution by one of them as stemming from his own depths, just as he knows the rest of described things such as water, dust, etc.

Man's knowledge of them is not confined to the Sharia being connected to them. Rather, the role of the Sharia is to emphasize that reason realizes and commends the doing of what is good and prohibits the doing of what is ugly.

Moreover, the most Praised One uses man's conscience as a basis for His decree due to the independence of man's rational might.

The Almighty says,

“Shall We treat those who believe and do deeds of righteousness the way we treat those who do mischief on earth? Shall We treat those who guard themselves against evil the same way as those who turn aside from the right?” 38:28

The most Praised One also says,

“Shall We then treat the people of faith like the people of sin? What is the matter with you? How do you judge?” 68:35–36

The most Praised One also says,

“Is there any reward for goodness (benevolence) other than goodness?” 55:60

Contemplation on these verses leaves no room to doubt that things that are good and those that are ugly are rational matters which man realizes through innate evidence without the need for an outside proof.

Outcomes of What Reason Deems to be Good or Ugly

The issue of what reason deems as good or ugly occupies a prominent status in logic researches because the most important of what this matter proves is the wisdom of the Creator, the Almighty, and that He is above doing what should not be done, thus resolving many logical and other problems. Here is the explanation for some of them.

Knowledge as a Must

Logicians, with the exception of the Asharis, have agreed about knowing Allah, Praise belongs to Him, being a must on every human being, an obligation mandated by reason. It means that reason judges the goodness of such knowledge and the ugliness of abandoning it due to such knowledge leading to thanking the One Who grants blessings, which is good, whereas abandoning it means falling into possible harm, which is ugly.

This stands if we advocate the independence of reason. Otherwise, such knowledge would not be a must, nor would it be rational, according to the supposition that such knowledge is isolated from its

judgment, nor would it be according to the Sharia because such Sharia is not proven yet.

Necessity of His Actions, Praise Belongs to Him, Being Above Sporting

What this issue mandates is that His actions, Praise belongs to Him, are above foul play, that they must be associated with objectives and purposes. This issue is one of those about which those who advocate His justice and the Asharis disputed. The first group judged it to be positive and the second to be negative. Men of wisdom have their own special opinion in its regard, too. Therefore, we are setting aside a research just for it after presenting these results.

Servants Must Bear Obligations

If His action, Praise belongs to Him, is above foul play, reason independently judges that every responsible person has to reach the goals for which he was created. This happens by commissioning these persons to do what gets them to reach perfection and turns them away from anything that prevents them from reaching such perfection, so they may not be left alone, so in the light of obligation, their spiritual energies may open.

Man's knowledge of what is good and what is ugly is not enough for him to reach perfection. There are matters that prevent him from reaching this goal, or they get him to reach them, while he is ignorant of them, and they are not known except through the path of inspiration (*wahi*) and of the Sharia.

Necessity of Sending Prophets

The issue of the need to send messengers, too, is based on this same matter. Reason, which realizes that man was not created randomly but for a purpose, also realizes that it cannot reach it except through divinely legislated guidance. So, it is independent in ruling that callers must be sent by Allah Almighty in order to guide humans.¹⁵

Necessity of Looking into Evidence of One Claiming to be a Prophet

There is no doubt that true prophets are sent with miracles and evidences. If someone claims ambassadorship from Allah Almighty to people, should people look into his claim and proof? Despite reason's independence in the field of ruling something to be good or ugly, there must be looking into and listening to such a claim in order to avoid a possible harm. As regarding the claim that there is no such need, this is not mandated by reason because, according to the isolated supposition, this is neither rational, nor is it supported by the Sharia, because it is yet to be proven. As a result, one who does not look into the matter is excused because he is not guided to the truth of the matter!

Knowledge of the Truth of the Claim of Prophetic Mission

If the claim put forth by the one who claims to be a prophet is linked to miracles and clear evidences,

and if we say that reason is independent in the field of deeming something as being good or ugly, we will judge that he is truthful. We do so because it is ugly to grant evidences to a lying claimant since doing so misleads people. But if we isolate reason from ruling in this situation, there is no evidence that such an individual is a truthful prophet, and the Sharia is yet to judge his truthfulness.

Conclusiveness, Perpetuation of Islam's Rulings

Reason's independence in ruling what is good and what is ugly, in the sense which you have come to know, that is, agreeability or disagreeability with high intellect, is the basis of conclusiveness and the perpetuation of Islam's rulings, their being sustained till the Judgment Day. This is so because instinct is common among all humans, and it does not change as civilizations change. The latter's change does not affect man's instinct. It does not alter its mold. Thus, what instinct sees as good or ugly becomes immortal till the Judgment Day, change and alteration never affect it. 16

Ethics Remain Unaltered

The issue of ethics remaining unaltered in all ages and civilizations, or their change according to the latter's change, has been one of the issues submitted lately by the Westerners for discussion, and views in its regard have been expressed. Some say that their roots are fixed, some say that they change according to the changes in systems and civilizations.

But the issue is not resolved except in the light of what reason deems as being good or ugly, and this stems from the dictates of the high human nature and the fixed nature. It is then that the bases of ethics are characterized with firmness and eternity. What changes as civilizations change are the customs and traditions.

For example, honoring a benevolent person is something that reason judges as being good, and this rational judgment never changes at all. Rather, what change, as time passes by, are the ways of expressing such honoring, how it is done. So, the bases are firm, while the customs and traditions, which are nothing but outfits of bases, are the ones that change.

Wisdom During Hard Times of Trials and Tribulations

Among the famous issues in Divine wisdom is that of trials and ills. The existence of these incidents created confusions about His wisdom, even about His knowledge, the Almighty that He is! Superficially, they, on the one hand, indicate the absence of command in the universe while, on the other, they contradict His wisdom in the sense His actions are perfect. They contradict His wisdom, in the absolute sense, that is, His action is above what must not be done, on the third hand. They contradict His wisdom, in particular, that is, His justice, the most Exalted One, His upholding justice, on the fourth hand. Since it is one of the quite lengthy matters that have so much been researched and discussed, whether in the science of logic, philosophy or divine wisdom, we here dedicate the discussion of them after

presenting an overall review of these conclusions.

Allah is Just, Does Not Wrong Anyone

One of the most obvious testimonies to His wisdom, the wisdom of the most Exalted One, which is fixed through rationally judging what is good and what is ugly, is His justice, that is, His upholding fairness. He does not wrong anyone, does not oppress anyone, and we will discuss this while explaining its status in the Islamic legislative system. It results in outcomes among which are the following:

Ugliness of Penalizing Without Explaining

If Allah Almighty is fair, He does not punish His servants without explaining to them what their obligations are, for the latter would be unfair, and reason judges that it is ugly, and one must rise above committing it. There is no difference between the absence of an explanation or the explanation not reaching these servants due to certain causes and factors. This basis is agreed on by fundamentalists on which they have based the originality of clearance from doubts that are not connected to overall knowledge.

Yes, the matter is based on what reason judges as being good or ugly if it is not proven from the Sharia through the Quran and the Sunnah, and it is supposed to be consulted after both latter sources.

Ugliness of Vesting Responsibility for What is Beyond Ability

One of the results of rational judgment of His justice, the Almighty that He is, is that His judgment obligates the presence of ability and might in the servant to do what He obligates him to do. Obligating and forcing them to do what is beyond their ability is unfair, it is ugly and the Wise One does not do it. Due to the importance of this research, we will also set aside an independent research after presenting these results.

Extent of Impact of Destiny on Man's Fate

One of the issues that result from His justice, the most Exalted One, is that decree and destiny bear an impact on man's fate. This issue, though fundamental in the Islamic faith, has been argued and discussed to the extent that some people were excommunicated from it and the blood of some other Muslims was shed even during Islam's early centuries.

From this issue, the *bada* or altering destiny, due to good or bad deeds, branches out. Familiarity with both of them requires detailing their researches. We, therefore, have set aside for each of them a chapter of its own in this book.

Man's Freedom of Choice

Among the issues that are based on the Almighty's justice is man's freedom of choice in his actions. Being forced to do what he does is unjust and oppressive. Since this matter, too, has been greatly

discussed, and views about it have varied from one extreme to another, we have set aside a separate chapter to discuss it in this book in addition to discussing the researches that branch out of it about what is good and what is bad, guidance and misguidance, etc.

Justifying Hereafter Punishment

One of the queries that have been submitted about His justice, the most Praised One, is: What justifies the hereafter penalty? This is approached from two angles.

First: Why should there be punishment in the hereafter? Is it to cool one's outrage, or is it to satisfy one's lust for seeking revenge, while both of them would be regarded as shortcomings above which Allah Almighty rises high?

Second: The requirement of the rational canon is that the penalty should be according to the extent of the crime. Anything less than that is unfair and unjust above which Allah rises high. So, why should the unbelievers and criminals be kept in the fire of hell without an end?

We will answer these questions after we discuss the Almighty's justice.¹⁷

Fruits of Determining What is Rationally Good or Ugly

Objectives Justify Actions of the Most Praised One

The Asharis say that the actions of the most Praised One are not justified by objectives, that He is not obligated to do anything, while He does nothing ugly, using the following norms of arguments:

First Argument

Had the Almighty's actions been for purposes, they would be by themselves incomplete, in need of achieving those purposes in order to be complete. This is so because a doer's purpose is not good unless it is proven that doing it is better for him than otherwise, and this is the meaning of perfection.¹⁸

Those who believe in His Adl, justice, i.e. the "Adlis", respond by saying that the actions of the most Exalted One are justified by the criterion of meeting His servants' interests. The condition of what is perfect or what is best is irrelevant here. This is endorsed by the author of *Al-Maqasid* and he is followed by the Matridis.¹⁹

Explaining the answer:

Is the Objective that of the Doer or of the Deed?

Al-Ashari confused the purpose as deemed to be the best by the doer and the purpose is rendered to his deed. The complementing exists in the first, not the second. One who says that His deeds are

justified by purposes, objectives, incentives and interests means the second, not the first. The objective in the first sense contradicts His being Independent in Himself and in His attributes as well as in His actions.

The objective in the second sense requires His deed getting out of being in vain and meaninglessness and out of His being, the most Praised One, toying and sporting. Combining His being Independent, needing nothing, with His being wise above toying and sporting, is saying that His actions cover interests, i.e. that they are wise, they are needed by His servants, by the command which He has set, not to His existence, to His own self, as is quite obvious.

Explaining the Purposeful Objective

The purposeful objective is one of the portions of the complete objective. It is meant according to the terms used by men of wisdom as getting the doer out of the ability to do a deed, out of the probability to the necessity, and it is present as an image, an idea, and is absent as an existence and a reality. It is the reason why the doer gets out of being a doer by force to a doer by action.

For example, the carpenter does not make a chair except for a required goal. Had it not been for imagining that goal, he would not have gotten out of being a doer by force to the field of being a doer by action. Thus, the purposeful objective has a role in achieving what is justified, in its getting out of the probability to actuality in order to move the doer in the direction of the deed, driving him to action.

We do not conceive the purposeful objective in this sense as applies to Him because He is absolutely independent when it comes to the status of His own self, to being described, to His actions. Just as He is perfect in the status of existence, perfect in the action status, He does not need anything beyond Himself to bring about something. Otherwise, had the doing of the Almighty been similar to what humans do, He would not have brought about, created, anything except for the purpose it serves. Thus, He would be incomplete in the status of action, being in need of something beyond His own self, and this contradicts His being absolutely Independent.

This is what the men of wisdom have stated, and it is undoubtedly right. The Asharis have taken advantage of it out of context, using it as a pretext to describe His actions as being without any purpose or goal. They made His actions akin to those who toy and sport. He (we seek refuge with Allah when saying this) does things without a goal, without a purpose. But seeking evidence from what the men of wisdom have stated, in order to prove what the Asharis have stated, is obviously untrue.

This is so because denying the unseen objective in this sense does not require His actions to stand behind interests and benefits for His servants whereby His command stands, even if they do not affect His ability to do, to justify. This is so because the most Praised One is a wise doer. A wise doer does not choose from among doable actions except what is suitable, and he does not do anything that is against his nature, in contradiction to it.

In other words, this is not meant that He is able to do one action rather than another, and that when He does something, He completes the objective, doing this rather than that. Instead, He, the most Praised One, can do both deeds, and He does not choose from them except what agrees with His goal and suits His wisdom.

This is the same like saying that the most Praised One is just and does not oppress. By saying so, we do not mean that His deed is perfect with regard to justice rather than injustice. Rather, we mean that He is perfectly capable of both. But His justice and wisdom, kindness and mercy, require that He chooses this rather than that while He is perfectly capable of doing both of them.

This is the truth behind saying that the actions of Allah Almighty are not justified by purposes, goals and interests despite His actions being free of interests and wisdom without complementing.

Second Argument

When the Ashari imams dealt with the logic of the Adlis in this regard, that the interests and wisdoms are not the doer's goals but those of the actions, that they are not rendered to the doer but to the servant and to the command, they submitted it for discussion, answering it as follows:

If they say, "We do not admit the link, the purpose may be rendered to someone else," the following can be said (in rebuttal): "If benefiting others and being benevolent to them is more worthy of being His actions, the most Exalted One, rather than their absence, necessitate that they should be there. The reason is: The Almighty will then create benefit from helping and being benevolent to His servants by doing what is most suitable to do and what is most fitting. If it is not better but is equivalent or preferable, it will not be right to be His objective.²⁰

Responding to *Nahj al-Haqq* of the Hilli *allama*, al-Fadl ibn Rozbahan produced the same argument saying, "A doer's goal is not right for him except what is best for him, something the existence of which is better than nonexistence. This is so because if the presence of something is equal to its absence, in as far as the doer is concerned, or if its presence is preferred with regard to him, it is not an incentive to undertake the deed and to be a cause for his doing it by necessity.

Anything that becomes a goal necessitates its presence with regard to the doer and more suitable for him rather than the opposite, such is the meaning of perfection. So, the doer would achieve his perfection by doing it, and he would be imperfect without it."²¹

One would make the following resign on the above. What is meant by what is most necessary and suitable is what suits one's affairs. A wise man does not undertake anything except what suits his affair. Also, any doer other than him undertakes what suits the principles that are present in him.

So, the explanation of what is most suitable and fit is in the sense that there is an outside factor beyond the doer, one that determines his ability and freewill. It imposes on him to find what is best and what is

most suitable, rather than acting according to the requirement of his perfection and wisdom. This means that He does not create except what is most suitable and what is most necessary, leaving nonsense and toying aside.

Since He, the most Praised One, combines in Him all the qualities of perfection, the most prominent of which is His being wise, He would be, according to such a description, required to find what suits Him and would abandon what is opposite. So, where does He stand with regard to the talk about completing perfection, deriving benefit, obligation and imposition? All this indicates that the logical issues were presented within a turbulent atmosphere, and that the opponent did not familiarize himself with the other side's logic.

The sum-up is that He, Praise belongs to Him, is perfect in what He does with regard to both actions: the deed that is linked to wisdom and the one that is without it. This is so due to the generality of His ability, Praise belongs to Him, to do what is beautiful and what is not, but His being wise deters Him from doing the latter, restricting His actions to the first. His being Wise deters Him from choosing the second option, restricting His actions to the first.

This holds true with regard to every deed that has two parts: one good and one ugly. For example, Allah is able to bless a believer, and He is able to torment him, too. He is perfect in His deed with regard to everyone. But nothing comes out of Him except what is good, not ugly.

Just as it cannot be said that an action is not done without serving a purpose, not being stripped of a purpose, and since blessing a believer is neither preferred nor is it equivalent to tormenting him, rather it is better and more fitting, the meaning of its being good and of its priority does not aim at rendering Him perfect, or that He derives a benefit from it. Rather, it aims at being suitable for Him, which incorporates all attributes of perfection, being above contradicting them.

So, His beauty and perfection, His being above doing what is ugly, requires His deed to be suitable for Him, the deed that is conjoint to wisdom, and to avoidance of the contrary.

Third Argument

There is a third evidence presented by the Asharis the sum up of which is that a deed's purpose is outside it. It takes place after one deed and before another. Since the most Exalted One is the doer of all things to start with, nothing is there in existence except being a deed of His, not an objective of another which does not take place without it so it would become the purpose of that deed, and that some deeds are not made as goals, one having more priority over another.²²

He should have determined the evidence fully and said: Had some deeds been the purpose of the whole, this would end up either at a deed having no purpose, since what is sought has already been fixed, or it is not, so it becomes sequential, which is impossible.

One may have the following resignation in its regard:

Nobody who casts a look at the cosmos would doubt that some things, which include relics, were created for other things. The purpose behind creating the low existents is that they serve higher ones. As for the purpose behind creating the high ones, it is to get them to reach a limit that becomes a manifestation of the attributes of their Lord and the perfection of the One Who initiated their creation.

If we cast a look at this cosmos fragmentally, by piecemeal, we will see that there are firsts, seconds, and thirds of actions. So, the most recent serves the one above it and becomes the purpose behind it, all in order to get to reach its possible perfection, which by itself is something beautiful. Creating beauty does not require a purpose other than its existence because the purpose lies in its own existence.

The above is valid if we look at the cosmos through a fragmented, piece-by-piece, method.

But if we cast a general look at the cosmos, the purpose behind the overall cosmic order is not outside the existence of the order so one would inquire about it by requiring evidence. Rather, it is a particularity that exists in it, and it is the order, in its pieces and particles, reaching possible perfection.

The anticipated perfection is a particularity that exists within the system, the order, itself and is regarded as an actual image of it. Allah, Praise belongs to Him, created the order, bringing about His absolute action, so that what He does, in part or as a whole, may reach the perfection that is attainable. The purpose is not separated from the order so one may be justified in asking about the purpose behind it, so that one may gradually reach the conclusion that something is there that has no purpose beyond it.

Since getting every possible thing to reach its perfection is a self-purpose, because it by itself is a good deed, the question is dropped about why someone did it. When He enabled every existent to reach its perfection, the question drops when the question about the good thing is raised.

If we ask about the goal behind creating and perfecting order, we would say that the purpose behind creating it is to get a thing that exists to reach its possible perfection. Then, once the question is made about the goal behind getting every possible thing to reach its possible perfection, this question would be irrelevant, out of place, because a good deed is by itself good and is liable to be done; the deed and the goal are one and the same.

Creation flows from what should be done to what can be done, and its reaching perfection is another abundance that perfects the first. The sum is abundance of the bliss of the Almighty for one who needs it. It does not deplete any of His treasures. What perfection is better and more magnificent than that? What goal is more obvious than that so another objective would be needed?

This is similar to one asking why Allah does one of the deeds that is good by itself, for the answer is hidden in the same question which is: He did it because it by itself is good, and what is good by itself does not need another objective to be done.

In order to bring the matter closer to comprehension, we would like to provide an example: If you ask a young man who exerts an effort to learn and ask him: Why do you exert such efforts in order to earn your degree? He would answer you by saying that it is for the sake of earning a scientific degree. If we repeat the question to him thus: What is the goal behind earning it?

He would answer by saying that it is to work at an industrial, scientific or administrative center. If we repeat the question to him and ask about the goal behind working there, he would say that it is to secure a means of earning a living for the family and dependents. If we ask him after all of this what the goal behind seeking prosperity and securing the means of making a living is, we will find out that the question is unnecessary because of the objectives which he has already provided and answered, that these are incidental goals for the objective which is particularly sought. If the speech reaches the latter, the question drops.

Quran and the Wise Deeds of the Most Praised One

What is amazing about the inattention of the Asharis about texts that are quite clear in this field such as this by the most Praised One:

“... Did you think that We had created you in jest, and that you would not be brought back to Us (for account)?” (Qur’an, 23:115)

as well as these:

“We did not create the heavens, the earth and all between them merely in (idle) sport” (Qur’an, 44:38).

“We did not create heavens and the earth and all between them in vain! That is the thought of unbelievers! But woe unto the unbelievers because of the fire (of hell)!” (Qur’an, 38:27).

“I have only created jinns and men so that they may worship Me” (Qur’an, 51:56).

There are other such verses that negate idle sporting from what He does and clearly indicate that such doing is coupled with wisdom and objectiveness.

Hadith people, followed by the Asharis who are famed for sticking to literal meanings of texts, not rendering their gist to Allah, the most Praised One, nor interpreting them, have no option except to ignore the previous verses or to interpret them. They flee from doing so while attributing the same (flight) to those who differ from them.

Followers of the “men of wisdom” sympathize with the Asharis’ way.

An error that is quite obvious is to say that those who follow the way of the “men of wisdom” sympathize with the beliefs of the Asharis and the depicting of both groups as saying that the actions of Allah, the

most Praised One, are not justified by purposes. This is a pure error. How can this be while we have Mulla Sadra finding fault with the Asharis and saying, “Among the Negationists²³ are folks who say that the actions of Allah Almighty are empty of wisdom and interest although you already know that nature has its purposes.”²⁴ He has also said, “Men of wisdom do not negate purpose and objective from any of His actions at all.

Rather, they deny it in His absolute deeds if the probable existence is observed as a whole unit as being a superfluous to Him, the most Exalted One. As regarding other specific and restricted actions, they proved that each of them has its own objective. How so while their books are fraught with pursuits of objectives of existents and of their benefits as any researcher in cosmetology, the sciences of compositions and ingredients, autopsy, medicine, etc. would testify?”²⁵

The theory of the men of wisdom, therefore, is summarized in two matters:

1. His actions are not characterized by sporting or nonsense, and there are interests, and there is wisdom, that both necessitate His deeds that benefit His servants. It is through them that the (cosmic) system stands.
2. If the probable existence is observed by way of absolution, His actions have no purpose outside Him because what is supposed is to observe the probable existence as a whole. Had the purpose, which is outside the Self, been present, it is incorporated into the probable existence, not beyond it.

They say that the goal is something outside the Self, whereas the goal is the same Self, so it may not lack effect. This is so because the need for something outside Himself in undertaking the deed is the essence of its lacking effectiveness. But what is supposed is that the most Praised One is perfect in His effect, Independent by Himself, and in His actions from anything other than Himself.²⁶

Moreover, they have a philosophical argument that is mixed with Gnostic proof. This argument aims at the purpose behind creation being His own Self, the most Praised One. Through it have they interpreted this verse:

“I have not created the jinns and mankind except so they may worship Me” (Qur’an, 51:56)

as well as His statement in a Qudsi *hadith* saying: “I was a hidden treasure, so I liked to be known; therefore, I brought creation into being so I may be known.” Allah, Glory to Him, is the ultimate goal of all goals. If someone would like to become familiar with their proof, let him refer to their books.²⁷

Afflictions, Calamities, Ills and God as Being Wise

The issue of afflictions, calamities and ills is one of the famous issues when it comes to divine wisdom, and it is relevant to the following topics:

1. If the evidence of the existence of the managing Creator is the order that prevails in the cosmos, how do you explain some unbalanced phenomena that violate it, such as earthquakes, torrential rains and floods, for they are among the best proofs that there is no such order?

2. Had the Exalted Maker been wise in what He does, precise in His actions, placing everything where it belongs, His actions being above what should not be, how do you explain these occurrences which do not agree with wisdom, whether they are interpreted as being done by the One Who does precise things or the One Whose actions are above what they should not be done?

3. If the Creator is just and equitable, how can His justice, Praise belongs to Him, coexist with these occurrences that swallow innocent lives simultaneously, damaging and destroying homes?

Thereupon, the research about calamities, afflictions and ills is linked to the afore-mentioned matters, and we submit this issue after having provided the evidence that He is wise.

Discussing ills is not a new issue. It was uncovered by Western philosophers, including the British philosopher (David) Hume. Some of those who are not versed in Islamic philosophy, even the Greek philosophy, may have imagined him to be as such. This issue was submitted for discussion by ancient Greek philosophers as well as philosophers of later times.

Aristotle is famous for saying that probable existents, according to rational classifications, are divided at the onset of probability into five categories:

1. What is all goodness and has no evil at all
2. What has plenty of goodness and little evil
3. What has plenty of evil and little goodness
4. Where goodness and evil are equal
5. What is absolute evil where there is nothing good at all

Then they stated that the last three categories do not exist in the world. Rather, what exist are two of the five mentioned categories.²⁸

Muslim philosopher Sadr ad-Din al-Shirazi (979 – 1050 A.H./1572 – 1640 A.D.) [Mulla Sadra or Sadr al-Mutaallihien, chief of Gnostics] scientifically discussed the issue of goodness and evil, calamities and afflictions, in his valuable work titled *Al-Asfar al-Arbaa* (the Four Books) in eight chapters. They were also discussed by the philosopher Sabzawari in the philosophy section of *Sharh al-Manzuma* in a medium research.

Before them, many dignitaries had preceded them, and they were followed by another group of Muslim thinkers. We are here quoting what these critics have stated, providing our own particular analysis and

critique. So, let us say the following:

The issue of evils and afflictions prompted some groups throughout history, and even nowadays, to believe that there are more creators, a trend known as dualism. They envisioned the god of goodness to be someone else other than that of evil in order to escape the said confusion, thus they were known as dualists. Since they believe that two gods are created for the one and single must God, they are in this regard Trinitarian.

The answer, anyhow, about the problem of evils is created in two facets:

First: It must be totally analyzed philosophically

Second: It must be analyzed in an educative way that bears an impact on the perfecting of the souls.

So, whoever wishes to go into detail in this research must enter through both doors, and here is the proof:

Philosophical Analysis of the Issue of Evil

The outcome of this analysis is that some people think that there are disorderly, harmful or destructive incidents stemming from their narrow limited outlook to these matters. Had they looked at these incidents within the frame of the “general cosmic order”, they would have surrendered that they are all goodness, and that the issue’s position would be similar to what Sabzawari the wise had said:

*What appears to some as unbalanced rhyme,
In the order of all, everything does rhyme.*

This is the answer in a nutshell. As for detailing it, this depends on explaining two matters:

First: The narrow Outlook to Phenomena

Describing the said phenomena as being disorderly, evils that do not fit first in the prevalent world order and second in His wisdom, the most Praised One, as a whole, and, thirdly, they do not agree with His justice and equity, stems from man’s outlook to the cosmos through his own self and its interests, making the latter the axis and the criterion for evaluating these matters.

When he looks at the incidents and sees that they harm his personal interests and those of his relatives, he immediately describes them as evils and lesions. This is only because he looks at these phenomena through a particular outlook, ignoring those in the world besides himself, be they those generations that passed by or those presently living in world areas or those that will come and live in this world.

In the first outlook, these incidents manifest themselves as ills and calamities. But these incidents, at the same time and through a piercing outlook, turn into goodness and righteousness, outfitted with attires of

wisdom, justice and order. In order to explain this, we would like to analyze some incidents that are regarded on the surface as ills and say the following:

One sees a torrential flood sweeping away his farm, an avalanche demolishing his home, a violent earthquake shaking its structure, but he does not see the positive results these incidents and phenomena carry in other fields of the human life.

This limited outlook of man is similar to a passerby seeing a bulldozer digging the ground or demolishing a building, causing a lot of noise, stirring dust in the air, so he immediately judges that this is harmful and bad. He does not know that all this is done in order to pave the way for building a big hospital that will receive patients, treat the injured and prepares for those who need treatment the means for such treatment and nursing.

Had he become familiar with these noble objectives, he would not have thus judged, and he would have described the demolition as being good, that there is no harm in the noise and billowing dust.

Similar to this individual in his limited outlook is the bat that is harmed by light because it harms its vision, whereas this light enables millions of eyes to see the horizons of the cosmos, facilitating for man the ways for earning a living and leading a life. Should the bat's judgment about light as being evil be the criterion for evaluating these useful natural phenomena? No, not at all.

Second: Phenomena are Episodes in a Long Series

Looking at an isolated natural phenomenon is a deficient and lame look. This is so because events are episodes that are connected to each other in an extended chain. Whatever takes place now is linked to the depths of the past and to what will take place in the future in a chain of reasons, causes and causations.

From this onset, nobody should judge a phenomenon while overlooking its precedent and successor. Rather, the sound judgment is achieved when it is evaluated as a whole and when it is looked at wholly rather than partially. Every incident on earth or in the air is strongly linked to the incidents that precede or follow it. Even when the wind blows and plays havoc with the sheets of paper that are stacked before you is strongly linked to what happened or what will happen in world areas.

So, a critic must observe all incidents with a hue of connection and formation. It is only then that his judgment will change and his ruling will be altered. He will not describe anything as being out of the ordinary, and he will not label anything as being evil.

If you have come to know both of these matters, let us bring some examples that are relevant to them:

1. If a storm hits shores, uprooting trees, destroying huts, turning furniture upside-down, it will then be described by those who live on those shores as being evil and as an affliction. But it, at the same time, implies vital results for another area.

It, for example, gets mast ships in the breadth of the sea to move, they are still when the wind is still. Thus, it saves hundreds of those who board them from losing their lives, getting them to reach the shores of safety. So, it is described by the passengers of such ships as being good.

2. Perhaps the winds may destroy some homes, but they at the same time are regarded as an effective means for flower pollination, moving the clouds that cause the rain and scatter smokes billowing from chimneys of factories and plants. Had these smokes remained and thickened, residents of the cities around these plants would have found it difficult or impossible to breathe. And there are other good results from winds before which some bad effects minimize or completely disappear.

3. Although earthquakes cause some partial or whole losses in properties and lives, they are described as being good if we understand the reason behind them, such as some suggestions, like the lunar gravitation pulling the earth crust to it, so the seabed rises, and it causes earthquakes in various areas of dry lands. This, at the same time, causes sea and river waters to rise and pour into surrounding lands, watering farms and valleys, bringing life back to them and a great deal of goodness.

Other useful benefits accrue from earthquakes with which one who examines these fields becomes familiar. So, while taking note of both of these matters, is there room for a hasty judgment that these incidents cause evils and calamities without any benefit?

Man's limited knowledge is the one that prompts him to issue such odd judgments on these incidents. Had he familiarized himself with his little knowledge compared to the knowledge with which he is not familiar, he would have retracted and repeated the recitation of this verse:

“Lord! You have not created (all) this for nothing! Glory to You!” (Qur’an, 3:191).

And he would have admitted the truth of this statement by the Almighty:

“Only little knowledge is communicated to you (O mankind!)” (Qur’an, 17:85)

and this other statement by the most Glorified One:

“They know only the outer (things) in the life of this world” (Qur’an, 30:7).

For this reason, we find the subjective scientists who were not dazzled by the scientific achievements, nor were they beguiled by the progress that took place to them, admitting the limitation of human knowledge, warning against passing a hasty judgment on things. Why not, while here is Professor William Kroksh, who discovered matter's radiation and invented many chemical experiment equipment, saying, “Among all qualities that assisted me in my psychological researches and paved for me the way to make natural discoveries, when those discoveries were sometimes unexpected, is my deeply rooted conviction of my ignorance.”²⁹

And there are other weighty statements by senior thinkers and great philosophers and those who are

interested in analyzing natural phenomena. You find them all admitting their ignorance and inability to familiarize themselves with the secrets of nature. The great mind in the world of mankind, the main mentor, says, "My knowledge reached the limit that I came to know that I am not knowledgeable."

Another Philosophical Analysis of Evils

You have come to know the previous philosophical analysis, and there is another philosophical analysis for the problem of afflictions and calamities that may be more precise, and it is summed up as follows.

Evil is a relative matter that does not have an existence by itself. Rather it manifests itself with one when some events are compared with each other, and here is its explanation:

Those who advocate dualism say that Allah, Glory to Him, is all goodness. So, how did He create poisonous scorpions and lethal snakes as well as wild beasts? They ignored the fact that to describe these phenomena as being evil is relative. As it is, a scorpion is not evil. Rather, it is described as such if it is compared to man who is hurt by its sting.

So, evil has no reality on the page of existence. Rather, it is an extractive matter to which the souls end when they compare. Without such a comparison, evil would not have had a concept, a reality. Here is an explanation for this answer:

Adjectives are of two types: Some of them have a reality similar to the thing by which they are described, such as someone being in existence, or each meter equals one hundred centimeters, etc. to describe someone as existing and to say that the meter is as such, are two fixed facts for things that exist, whether the mind contemplated on them or not. Had there been only a single human on the face of earth or one meter, both descriptions are fixed for them.

There are those that have no reality because man shifts to such a description or, better put, the mind extracts it through comparing, such as what is big and what is small, etc. Bigness is not a reality for what it is applied, it is realized through comparing it with what is smaller.

For example, if you come to know that adjectives are of two types, you have to analyze the concept of evil in the light of such a statement and say this: The scorpion being in existence and it has poison is a fact. As for its being evil, this is not part of its existence. Rather, it describes the scorpion's poison when compared with man who is harmed by it or who loses his life because of it. Otherwise, it is regarded as perfection for the scorpion the survival of which depends on it. If it is as such, it will be easy for you to resolve the evil complex from its various aspects.

As regarding the aspect of *Tawhid* when it comes to the Creator, that is, there is no Creator in existence other than Allah, Praise belongs to Him, who is all goodness, One Whom evil cannot reach, so how could He create existents characterized by evil? The answer is that the creature is the essence of these things that have no true attributes. Rather, they are described as evil which is not a reality but is in need

for a cause. Actually, it is a relative matter to which one directs his attention when he makes a comparison.

It is to this meaning that statements by ancient philosophers have referred when they said the following:

1. Evil is nihilistic, not an existing matter in need for a justification.
2. Evil is not as such by itself but is incidental.
3. If you review all things in existence in this world that are labeled by people as being evil, you will not find them to be evil by themselves. Rather, they are incidentally evil, essentially good.

The same applies to abhorred manners: They complement beastly and brutish psyches and are not evils in the eyes of wrathful and carnal forces. Evil are these lowly manners compared to the weak psyches that are incapable of contain their forces and check them against going to extremes or to do away with things rather than directing them towards the path of obedience which guarantees lasting happiness.

So is the case with pains, ailments, distresses and worries: from the standpoint of their being realizations, due to their existence or to resulting from the affecting factor, are luxurious good things, yet they are ills compared to what is attached to them.

From the aspect of His being described, the most Praised One, as being wise and as perfecting his deeds and actions, there is nothing in the creation of these incidents and existents that contradicts this wisdom. He, all Praise is due to Him, created scorpions, snakes, wild animals and beasts in the best of creation, giving them a measure of life that suffices them:

“He (it is) Who gave everything He created its form and nature and further gave it guidance” (Qur’an, 20:50).

These incidents and existents are described as being evil, and this seems to be contrary to wisdom when it comes to comparison; it is an external mental matter.

Till now, we have come up with this result: There are two factors that prompted man to imagine that evil is a certain external thing. Finding it is regarded as being contrary to wisdom and justice, it is a rebellion against orders. These two factors are:

1. The attitude towards things from the perspective of egotism and the ignoring of all other existents.
2. The notion that evil has an external certitude similar to that to which it is attributed while one is being unaware of its being a nihilistic thing towards which the mind directs its attention when a comparison is made.

It is time to look for an educative analysis of evils that facilitates the belief in the fact that these evils are not created as educative external things that contradict wisdom and justice.

Educative Analysis of the Evils Issue

These incidents have important educative effects once in the material life of humans, and once on removing conceit and unawareness from minds and consciences. For the sake of these benefits, creating them is sound, whether we say that evil exists by itself, as those who oppose say, or it exists incidentally, as we have proven.

Calamities: A method to Release Energies

Trials and tribulations are the best means for releasing energies, for the sciences to advance and human life to be elevated. Scholars of civilization state that most civilizations did not flourish except in atmospheres of wars, disputes and competitions when people resorted to invent defensive means while facing attacking foes or to repair the damage and destruction wrought by wars.

During such conditions, capabilities move to rejoin what is disjointed, complete what is incomplete and prepare what is required. The common axiom says, "Necessity is the mother of invention."

In a clear statement, if man is not exposed to problems in his life, his energies will remain frozen, motionless, neither growing nor opening. Instead, such talents and the release of energies from potential to actuality is all pawned to man falling into the path of calamities and hardships.

Yes, we do not claim that all major results are found in catastrophes, but we do claim that their occurrence prepares suitable grounds for man to get out of laziness. For this reason, we find the parents who keep their children away from difficulties and hardships do not push into the society except children who shake under any blowing wind just like a fresh plant whenever a breeze blows.

As for those who raise their children in life's atmospheres that are surrounded with problems and calamities, push into the society children who are firmer than mountains when the storm blasts.

Imam Ali bin Abu Talib (as) has said, "The tree in the wild is stronger in stem, pleasing magnificent things have thinner skins, Bedouin plants make a stronger firewood, and their fire is slower in dying out."³⁰

It is to this fact that the most Praised One points out when He says,

"... It may be that you dislike something while Allah brings about a great deal of good out of it"
(Qur'an, 4: 19),

"So, truly, with every difficulty, there is relief: Truly with every difficulty, there is relief"
(Qur'an, 94:5-6)

and

“Therefore, when you are free (from your immediate task), still labor hard, and turn (all) your attention to your Lord” (Qur’an, 94:7-8).

That is, expose yourself to exhaustion and fatigue by laboring, endeavoring and exerting effort after you complete your adoration, as if victory and affliction are inseparable allies and brothers.

Afflictions and Calamities are Warning Bells

Enjoying material talents, immerse in pleasures and desires necessitate a great deal of unawareness of moral values. The more one is immersed in pleasures and blessings, the more distant he becomes from moral aspects. This is a fact that everyone realizes in his life and in the lives of others, and he finds it in the pages of history. So, one must abandon this heedlessness when shaken and awakened by a warning bell that reminds him, awakens his nature and gets him out of his inattention.

There is nothing more useful in this field than some incidents that interrupt the luxurious way of living with some disturbances so one may realize his inability, abandon his conceit and allay his oppression. We find in the Holy Quran clear statements about the link between oppression and the sense of independence. The most Exalted and Great One says,

“Man transgresses all bounds in that he looks upon himself as being self-sufficient” (Qur’an, 6-7).

For this reason, the Holy Quran justifies some calamities and tribulations as descending in order to remind one, to take him back to Allah. The most Praised One says,

“Whenever We sent a Prophet to a town, We took up its people in suffering and adversity, in order for them to learn humility” (Qur’an, 7:94).

He also says,

“We punished the people of Pharaoh with years (of drought) and shortness of crops (so) that they might receive admonition” (Qur’an, 7: 130).

Thus, afflictions and calamities become a cause for awakening man, for admonishing him, similarly to a physician slapping the face of a tranquilized patient in order to wake him up. Without that slap, the patient would perish.

We have come up with this result: Moral perfection is pawned by trials and tribulations. Likewise, mental openness is pawned by afflictions and calamities.

An aware individual uses them as means to abandon conceit just as he uses them as a ladder for ascending the steps of scientific perfection, and he may not derive any benefit from them, so he regards them as afflictions and catastrophes in life.

Afflictions Cause a Return to Righteousness

There is a goal behind the cosmos, and there is also a goal behind man's creation. The goal behind the creation of man is to reach perfection and arrive at whatever he can reach. The goal behind sending prophets and holy books is only to achieve this sublime objective.

Since the transgressions and sins are the greatest causes that distance one from the goal behind his creation, obstructing the march of his perfection, afflictions and calamities serve as the best means to familiarize a transgressor with the results of his extreme tyranny and transgression so he may return to the truth and take a step back to the middle path. It is to this gist that the most Praised One points out saying,

“Mischief has appeared on land and in sea because of (the mischief) which the hands of men have committed so that (Allah) may grant them a taste of some of (the results of) their deeds, so they may turn back (from evil)” (Qur’an, 30:41).

In another verse, the most Praised One says,

“If people of the towns had only believed (in) and feared Allah, We would certainly have released to them (all kinds of) blessings from the heavens and earth, but they rejected (the truth), and We brought them to account for their misdeeds” (Qur’an, 7:96).

Afflictions are a Cause for Realizing and Appreciating Blessings

If life keeps one single style, this mandates that life will not manifest itself as being enjoyable, lovely, contrarily to the case if it alternates between what is bitter and what is sweet, what is beautiful and what is ugly. Safety's true value cannot be realized except when it is lost. Health cannot be appreciated except when one is sick. Ease cannot be appreciated except when affliction befalls, nor do we realize the sweetness of life except when we taste its bitterness.

Life's beauty and the value of nature stem from diversity and the shift from one status to another, one condition to another. For this reason, we sense how the Creator of nature placed valleys beside mountains, thorns beside roses, bitter fruits beside sweet ones, saline water beside sweet water, up to the end of manifestations of variations as well as opposites that vest on nature magnificence and beauty, perfection and greatness.

These are the educative impacts of calamities and afflictions. They suffice for their taking place, justifying their happening in the human life.

Artificial Calamities of Tyrannical Systems

There are calamities that an ignorant person attributes to the Creator of the cosmos. The truth of the matter is that they are of his own making, the result of his own ways. Actually, the tyrannical systems are

the ones that caused those calamities and brought those catastrophes into being. Had there been systems based on divine values, humans would not have been exposed to such calamities.

The unjust distribution of wealth has been the cause for wealth being accumulated with the few and its departure from many. It has been a cause for the first group enjoying all means of prevention and protection from diseases, incidents and deprivations of the second group. These artificial calamities are outside the framework of this research. They do not wake up the intellect, nor do they purify the souls. Instead, they make grounds suitable for uprisings and revolutions.

Up to here, we have come up with this result: The phenomena that are unbalanced, according to the superficial outlook, are actually balanced compared to the overall system. They have social and educative impacts that are indispensable to human life. So, they are not regarded as contradicting the prevailing systems, nor do they contradict the wisdom of the Creator, nor to His justice and fairness, Praise and Exaltation belong to Him.

Allah is Just and Does Not Oppress

As you have come to know, the requirements of rational judgment of something, as being good or bad is that reason, as it is, realizes this thing, that is, whether it is good or bad. One of these descriptions is fixed for a thing, as it is, without the interference of a circumstance or restriction, without the intervention of a special realization faculty.

Therefore, as it deems something as being good or bad, reason becomes aware of a general reality that is equal with all those who realize, who do anything, without distinction between what can be done or what should be. Justice is good, its doer is lauded by everyone, whereas injustice is ugly, its doer is looked down on by everyone.

On this basis, how can the Praised Almighty, the One Who realizes an action and its description, I mean the doer of an action being lauded or held in contempt, regardless of who this doer is, do anything which He deems as being too lowly above which one must rise?

Thereupon, Allah, the most Praised One, is just because injustice is ugly and one must rise above it. An ugly deed is never done by the Wise One. Justice is good and one must be adorned by it. Hence, being characterized with justice is one of the matters that are relevant to His wisdom, above doing what should not be done.

If you will, you can say that man realizes that doing what is equitable is anyone's perfection, whereas committing inequity is anyone's shortcoming. According to what reason judges, it also is the same with the most Praised One. How can He permit the doing of what is the antithesis of perfection, what brings about shortcomings?³¹

Avoiding Confusion

It may be said that something regarded by man as being good or bad does not mean it is so with Allah, Praise belongs to Him; so, how can it be found out that one does not abandon his obligation, nor does he commit what is ugly?

The answer is clear: The gist of the former principle is that man realizes the goodness of justice and the ugliness of injustice. This applies to anyone who has realization, who senses things, and to everyone who is rational, wise, without distinction among circumstances and factors.

This is similar to realizing that four means a couple of pairs. Everyone's reason realizes that they are pairs without any particular possibility (to the contrary). The situation is not akin to man's probable judgment of what the most High One should do. Rather, it is akin to discovering a general, necessary and commonsense principle sensed by all those who have realization without making a distinction between their Creator and what they create. This matter is not confined to this principle. Rather, all general principles in theoretical wisdom are like that.

Based on the above, it is proven that the most Praised One is above anything that is ugly, that He is characterized by all perfection when it comes to doing anything. It is, then, proven that due to His wisdom, He does not commit what makes no sense. Therefore, He is just, He does not commit injustice, oppression or aggression.

Justice in the Holy Quran

Sacred verses have one after the other focused on the most Praised One doing what is fair. Some of them are:

“There is no god but He: It is witnessed by Allah, His angels and those endowed with knowledge, standing firm on justice.” (Qur’an, 3:18)

Just as He has testified to His justice, He has defined the goal behind sending prophets. So they may uphold justice among people.

The most Praised One has also said,

“We sent Our Messengers with clear Signs and sent down with them the Book and the balance (of right and wrong) so that men may stand for justice” (Qur’an, 21:47).

He has also stated that justice is the main basis in holding His servants to account on the Judgment Day. The most Praised One says,

“We shall set up scales of justice on the Day of Judgment, so that not a soul will be dealt with unjustly in the least” (Qur’an, 21:47).

These and other verses contain guidance to what reason realizes from its own depth, that is, justice is the perfection of every living existent that realizes and has the power to choose, that the actions of Allah Almighty in this life and in the hereafter have to thus be characterized, and so must His ambassadors.

Justice in Islamic Legislation

This status is enjoyed by justice. Without it, His promise and warning would not have been trusted, as you have come to know. Many Islamic beliefs would have fallen apart. It is the one that made Him, the most Praised One that He is, define His rulings and describe His legislations as being just, that He does not legislate anything unless it fully agrees with justice, *adl*; He is the *Adl*.

The most Praised One says,

“We do not place a burden on any soul greater than it can bear: Before Us is a record which clearly shows the truth: They will never be wronged” (Qur’an, 23:62).

The first portion of this verse sheds light on His justice, the most Praised One that He is, among His servants as He legislates His rulings. The second portion highlights His justice on the Day when awards are distributed.

Justice in Narratives of Ahl al-Bayt Imams (as)

Imam Ali, peace with him, and his offspring are famous for being just. It is him do the Mutazilites cite, so much so that it is said, “*Tawhid* and *Adl* (Unity and Justice of God) are Alawis (related to Imam Ali), whereas anthropomorphism and fatalism are Umayyad.” Here we provide you with some of the legacy of members of Ahl al-Bayt, peace with them:

1. Ali, peace with him, was asked about *Tawhid* and *Adl*, so he said, “*Tawhid* means that you should not have any doubts about Him, while *Adl* means you should not accuse Him (of whatever does not suit Him).”³² It was already presupposed that the most Praised One is just, so a meaning for His justice was sought.

Ibn Abul-Hadid has said, “Both of these foundations are cornerstones of the science of logic, the slogan of our Mutazilite fellows who rejected the old meanings which al-Ashari and his fellows had fixed, and it is due to their deeming the Creator, Praise is due to Him, as being above doing anything ugly.”

The meaning of his phrase “you should not have any doubts about Him” is: You should not think that He has a body or an image or that He is in a particular place or filling all directions, as some people have claimed, nor should you conceive Him as being a light or a force penetrating the whole world, as some have said, nor should you regard Him as the product of a casual incident that takes place or happens somewhere, nor is He accidental, as the Christians have said, or that meanings and causes can explain Him. If any of these whims is entertained, the entertainer will have violated *Tawhid*.

As for the other foundation, you must not “accuse Him,” i.e. you must not charge Him of having forced you to do what is ugly and that He would then punish you for it. He is above any of this. And do not charge Him of enabling liars to perform miracles through which they mislead people. Do not charge Him of having commissioned you to do what is beyond your ability or charge Him of any justice-related issue which our fellows have detailed in their books, such as compensation for pain, for this is not an option, or for rewarding for good deeds, for this is a must. He is truthful to His promise and to His warning; there is no way around it.

The whole matter is that the way our fellows have conceived justice and the Unity of the Creator are both derived from statements made by the Commander of the Faithful, peace with him. This is one of the areas where our fellows have made specific statements. Statements of this type that the Imam (as) has made are numerous.³³

2. As-Saduq has quoted Imam as-Sadiq, peace with him, as saying that a man said this to him: “The foundation of the creed is built on *Tawhid* and *Adl*. The knowledge relevant to this foundation is abundant, but a wise person cannot avoid learning it; so, please state something which is easy to comprehend, something which can be memorized.” The Imam, peace with him, said, “As regarding *Tawhid*, it means you do not permit yourself to attribute to your God what can be attributed to you. As for *Adl*, you must not attribute to your Creator anything about which He would blame you.”³⁴

3. Imam Ali, peace with him, has said, “And I further testify that He is just, truly just, and His judgment is final.”³⁵

4. He, peace with him, has also said, “He is the One Who is truthful to what He promises, Who rises above dealing wrongfully with His servants, Who is equitable with regard to His creatures, just when He judges them.”³⁶

5. He, peace of the Almighty with him, has also said, “He is the One Who is so clement, He forgives; He is so just in His judgment.”³⁷

6. He, peace with him, has also said, “Lord! Include me in Your forgiveness, not in Your justice.”³⁸

There are other such cherished statements by the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt (as) some of which we will quote for you when we discuss fate and destiny and when we research fatalism and free choice.

Who Correctly Justifies a Servant's Penalty?

Divine texts have supported each other with regard to the punishment of criminals and denunciation of oppressors. The discussion falls into two categories:

First: What is the purpose behind the punishment? Is it to satisfy one's urge for revenge? The most Praised One has said,

“... If anyone is killed wrongfully, We have given his heir authority (to demand qisas, retribution, or to forgive): But do not let him exceed the bounds in the matter of taking life away, for he is helped (by the Divine Law)” (Qur’an, 17:33).

But this purpose does not suit the most Praised One because He is greater than having such a motive. It would have required Him to be sentimental. Should it be for admonishing others? But this applies in the temporal abode, not in the abode of rewards (or penalties). The most Praised One says,

“The woman and the man who is guilty of adultery or fornication, flog each with a hundred lashes; do not let compassion move you in their case, in a matter prescribed by Allah, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day, and let some believers witness their punishment” (Qur’an, 24:2).

So, when He says, “... Let some believers witness their punishment”, this proves that the purpose behind whipping the adulterer and adulteress is to admonish others, or it is one of such objectives.

Second: One of the established rational norms of conduct is that the punishment must equal the crime in its method and extent. But this equation is negated when it comes to penalties in the hereafter. Some criminals remain in the fire forever although the period of their transgression was much shorter than that of their penalty.

The most Praised One has said,

“But those who reject faith and belie Our signs shall be the companions of the Fire; there shall they dwell (forever)” (Qur’an, 2:29).

He has also said,

“Allah has promised the hypocrites, men and women, and the rejecters of faith, the fire of Hell: They shall dwell in it: It suffices them: God’s curse and an enduring punishment is (in store) for them” (Qur’an, 9:68).

Al-Mufid has said, “The Imamites are of the consensus that the warning about eternity in the fire of hell is particularly addressed to the unbelievers in particular rather than to those who commit sins and who have knowledge about Allah, the most Exalted One, those who surrender to His obligations from among the ones who observe the prayers, etc.”³⁹

In his *Aqaid* book, al-Saduq says, “It is our belief that only those who commit apostasy and who associate partners with Allah will remain in the fire of hell forever. As for the sinners from among those who believe in *Tawhid*, they will get out of it through mercy that will come to their rescue.”⁴⁰

As regarding the answer for the first question, we would like to say: Asking about the purpose behind the punishment, whether it is for satisfying one’s desire for revenge, or for providing admonishment for those

other than the punished person, this covers the penalties that are legislated through law making and legislating. Punishing in this field is to meet two goals: to seek revenge, or to teach a moral lesson.

But if the punishment is the result of acting on both following viewpoints, the question becomes out of place because there is an existing link between the existence of the criminal and of the punishment that involves his presence in the life to come. It is then that the question about why the punishment takes place is out of place. Rather, the question is directed at the possibility of separating one from the other, at putting something up and another down, such as suitable penalties.

The external link between man and penalty is viewed in two ways:

First: Each of the criminal or righteous action of man in the world of nature creates in the soul an aptitude that suits it because of repeating that particular action, practicing it. These psychological aptitudes are not separated from man's existence. Rather, they form his very existence, the depth of his essence. A righteous or a sinning person is resurrected with these aptitudes that he accumulated in this short life through his obedience or disobedience of the Almighty, and each aptitude has its particular impact from which it is not separated.

You may say that every soul, with the aptitudes that surround it, creates the images that suit it: either Paradise where there is spirit and fragrance, or hell and its flames and torment. Thereupon, either reward or punishment, which is created for the soul, maintains it in a way that is incapable of abandoning such creating.

Thus, a man of righteousness, in whose soul the righteous aptitudes became firm in this life, never ceases thinking about what is right, and his soul never settles or calms down except through such thinking. His antithesis is a sinner in whose soul malicious aptitudes became deeply rooted by way of the satanic actions that he does in this short life. He never ceases thinking about evil and lowly matters. Even if he tries to distance himself from thinking about what suits his soul, he will not be able to do so.

It becomes obvious from reading what *allama* Tabatabai writes that the rewards and penalties of the hereafter are among the realities which one gains through his either righteous or vicious actions, and they both are present in this temporal life. But the veils act as a barrier between him and what he has already prepared for himself: either Paradise or the Fire.

He has said, "What is clear from the verses (of the Holy Quran) is that there is for man in this life what is beyond it: another life where he will live either happily or miserably, a life that has beginnings and roots. In it will he live, and with it he will be familiar. He will see it for sure when causes come to an end, when barriers are removed."

He goes on to say, "Actions prepare by themselves, or by their requirements and impacts, matters that are sought or not sought, that is, goodness or evilness. It is the one with which one will become familiar when the veils are removed."⁴¹

What he states will become clear in many verses that he stated in his book.

In the light of what we have indicated, one who approaches the new life does so with either good or vile aptitudes. This life has requirements that necessitate it, whether he likes it or not. These requirements are manifested in the shape of either blessings or condemnations for either group.

It is then that the question about the purpose behind tormenting drops. This is similar to one who drinks poison, so he is killed by it, or one who drinks medicine, so he is healed by it. The question here about the purpose behind killing or healing makes no sense.

Second: What is determined in place is that man's actions have two forms: one in this life and another in the life to come. Man's action manifests itself in every circumstance as it suits it. Performing the prayers has its own form in this life, its movements and pronouncements, but it also has another form in the life hereafter.

Fast, too, has a special presence in this circumstance expressed by abstention from whatever breaks it, and it has another presence in the higher world expressed as protection from the Fire. Such is the case with all actions, be they good or bad. This is what the Book of the most Exalted One tells us:

“Those who unjustly eat up the property of orphans eat up a Fire into their own bodies: They will soon be enduring a blazing Fire!” (Qur'an, 4: 10).

The most Praised One has also said,

“Those who covetously withhold the gifts which Allah has given them of His grace must not think that it is good for them: Nay, it will be the worst for them: Soon the things they covetously withheld shall be tied to their necks like a twisted collar on the Judgment Day” (Qur'an, 3: 180).

He, Praise belongs to Him, has also said,

“On the Day when heat will be produced out of that (wealth) in the Fire of Hell, and their foreheads, flanks and backs branded with it, [it will be said to them:] ‘This is the (treasure) you hoarded up for yourselves: Then taste the (treasures) you hoarded!’” (Qur'an, 9:35).

There are other verses that prove that the same actions will be present on the Judgment Day but in a hereafter form. This shows that there is a reality for man's actions that shall be manifested in another form in the life to come.

These actions stick to his presence and never part with him. If the deed of everyone is regarded as one required for his existence, for the intricacies of his essence, the question about why the torment drops, the question will be directed towards whether the separation is possible.

The difference between the two is obvious: In the first, the soul of the righteous or impious individual

creates his reward or punishment, Paradise or Hell, according to the aptitudes which it had acquired in this life so as the one who has this aptitude cannot quieten himself and be calm except by doing what suits it. In the second, work will manifest itself in the hereafter without the soul having any role in that life in manifesting these deeds as they appear. Rather, it is one of the requirements of the presence of the individual who is lodged for judgment.

So, man is not resurrected alone. Rather, he is resurrected with whatever attaches to himself, to his existence. Whatever accompanies him becomes part of him and is never separated from him. Briefly, the reward connection of man in the first category is productive: The soul is productive; it generates the good or the bad outcome. As regarding the second, it is one of the requirements of man's presence and complications but without production.

The most Exalted One has said,

“We have fastened every man's fate to his own neck: On the Day of Judgment We shall bring a scroll out for him which he will see spread open” (Qur'an, 17:13).

Perhaps if you look at the verses that talk about the presence of the same deed in the hereafter, and if you add to them “the possibility that the hereafter form of these actions is among the requirements of man's goodness or evilness,” it will be easy for you to answer the question about why there is punishment. The most Praised One has said,

“... On the Day when every soul will be confronted with all the good it has done and all the evil it has done” (Qur'an, 3:30),

“They will find all that they did, placed before them, and your Lord will not treat a single one of them unjustly” (Qur'an, 18:49),

and

“Each soul will then come to know what it has put forth” (Qur'an, 81:14).

The most Praised One tells us about Luqman who said,

““O son!” (said Luqman,) “If there may be the weight of a mustard-seed, and if it were (hidden) in a rock, or (anywhere) in the heavens or on earth, Allah will bring it forth” (Qur'an, 31:16).

So, what will be present on the Day of Rewards are the same deeds described as actions personified, their realization in the form that suits those circumstances.

Perhaps what is indicated in the verses and traditions, that is, the act of righteousness is the tilling for the Hereafter, or the absolute labeling of deeds, is also a hint to this answer. The same deed, be it an act of obedience or disobedience (of the Almighty), is like a seed which man sows in his worldly life. This

seed grows, perfects itself and becomes a harvest for him in the hereafter which he reaps as he had sowed it. The most Praised One has said,

“To anyone who desires the tilth of the hereafter, We grant an increase in his tilth, and to any who desires the tilth of this world, We grant him some of it, but he has neither share nor lot in the hereafter” (Qur’an, 42:20).

The Commander of the Faithful, peace with him, has said, “A good deed is harvested in the hereafter.”⁴²

All of this shows that the reward link with man is one of cause and causation.

Man, in his existence, is a cause for his reward either through his creating, bringing about, or his being a planter in this life of that which he shall reap in the hereafter. There is no separation between him and his tilth. If the link is as such, i.e. of a cause and causation, there will be no room to raise such a question.

Yes, a legislator who is familiar with the Quran and Sunnah ought not restrict bliss and wrath to these two categories, denying a separate Paradise or torment also from man’s existence and whatever he does. Obviously, for each of Paradise and the Fire there is a separate presence to which one renders his deeds.

Despite all of this, there is no objection to tormenting or blessing through one of the past meanings. Since the confusion is rational, suffices it to be submitted from the two ways that we have stated above.

As regarding our answer to the second question, we would like to say the following:

What has already been stated about the rational way of a crime fitting its punishment, in extent and in method, is connected to the resulting penalties. But if the penalty is the impact of an action, we do not see it fitting its extent and method:

A driver who for one second is inattentive may bear psychological and financial losses that will last for the rest of his life. One who hides thorns under the ground, or who plants roses, will reap thorns or roses as long as he lives. The deed was instantaneous, whereas its outcome is lasting. So, the equation between the effort and its fruit is not maintained here.

If man’s endeavor in this life is a seed the fruit of which he will harvest in the hereafter, there is no objection to the result being lasting while the labor is instantaneous or short-lived. This by itself suffices to remove the confusion. The most Praised One has already acquainted him with the hereafter result of his actions in this life, and that his short-lived deeds will bring about a lengthy or perpetual sigh, that his deed in this life will produce for him in the hereafter either thorns that will hurt him or roses that will perfume him. He has done his deed with his knowledge and free choice. Had there been blame, it should be directed at him. The most Praised One has told us this about Satan:

“And when the matter is decided, Satan will say: ‘It was Allah Who gave you a promise of the truth: I, too, promised you, but I failed in my promise to you. I had no authority over you except to call you and you listened to me: So, do not reproach me but reproach your own souls. I cannot listen to your cries, nor can you listen to mine. I reject your former act in associating me with Allah. There must be a grievous penalty for the wrongdoers’” (Qur’an, 14:22).

The previous verses regard the hereafter rewards as man’s tilth, and they support this viewpoint.

Yet it is possible that remaining forever in the penalty is relevant to whether there is no room for (Divine) mercy, when it is not possible for an outpour (of His forgiveness). The Almighty has said,

“Surely those who seek gain in evil and are engulfed in their sins are the companions of the Fire: They shall dwell in it forever” (Qur’an, 2:81).

Perhaps the phrase “...engulfed (or immersed) in their sins means their sins overwhelm them in a way which necessitates the disappearance of any ability or readiness for mercy to descend on them, for them to get out of the realm of His wrath, indignation.”⁴³

Whatever it may be, it appears that what we have stated is accurate if you keenly consider the past answer for the first question which is: The reward may be created for the soul, or it may always accompany man; likewise, the rational way is the same as is quite obvious.

Mandating Beyond One’s Tolerance

A sound conscience and commonsense rule that one must not be ordered to do beyond his ability. If the one thus ordering is a human being who already knows that the individual whom he orders is unable to perform what he is ordering him to do, serious willpower is not sparked within him, between himself and his conscience, with his soul. For this reason, ordering the doing of what is intolerable renders the same order impossible.

But if the One Who is issuing the order is Allah, the most Praised One, the matter in this case is obvious from two standpoints:

First: Commanding what is unbearable is rationally ugly. It is impossible to be attributed to the most Praised One due to His wisdom. He never requires His servant to do what he is incapable or unable to do, such as requiring a terminally ill person to fly to the sky, or getting a camel to go through a needle’s hole.

There is no difference between the same order being possible but is beyond the frame of the ability of the ordered individual, such as requiring the latter to fly in the sky, or the same order being impossible by itself without a distinction between one individual and another, such as requiring one to get a large body in a small one without the small one being enlarged or the big one being reduced in size.

Second: Quranic verses clearly indicate that the most Praised One does not require man to do anything beyond his ability:

“Allah does not place a burden on any soul greater than it can bear” (Qur’an, 2:286).

The most Exalted One has also said,

“Your Lord is never unjust (in the least) to His servants” (Qur’an, 41:46),

and

“Your Lord will never treat a single one of them unjustly” (Qur’an, 18:49).

Injustice is causing harm without a justification. What injustice is there greater than that? Allah Almighty is greatly above being as such.

This is the summary of what has been stated. Scholars of *usool* (principles of the faith) and others have simplified it in their own books through their own craftsmanship.

With all these glaring proofs, we see the Asharis treading a different path, permitting the ordering of what is unbearable. They thus demonstrated that the Islamic creed opposes conscience, sound reason and nature. It is regrettable that the Orientalists derived the tenets of Islam from Ashari logicians, so they describe them as being contrary to reason and nature because the Asharis permit the commanding of what is unbearable.

What is important is to analyze the verses that they have cited as their evidences:

Asharis’ Proofs for Commanding What is Unbearable

Instead of referring to reason in this field, the Asharis have cited verses which they imagine as proving their viewpoint although they are distant from what they adopt in this regard. Here are these verses with their own using them as evidence, as well as our analysis of them:

The first is this verse:

“In no way will they frustrate (His design) on earth, nor do they have protectors besides Allah! Their penalty will be doubled! They lost the power to hear, and they did not see!” (Qur’an, 11:20).

The reason for saying that this is evidence is that they were commanded to listen to the truth, and they were commissioned to act upon it although “They lost the power to hear, and they did not see”. This proves that mandating what is beyond one’s ability is permissible. It is proven by the token that anyone who does not accept the truth and who does not listen to it by way of accepting it will not be able to do so.

One may resign thus: The evidence here is very weak. Its weakness appears from interpreting the verse's statements, one by one.

a. When the Almighty says, "In no way will they frustrate (His design) on earth," He means they cannot frustrate Allah Almighty in their worldly life, that they came out of the realm of adoration. So, their ability (to do so) did not surpass that of Allah Almighty.

b. His saying, "...nor do they have protectors besides Allah" means even if they take for masters their own idols, although they are not in reality masters, they have no masters besides Allah.

c. His saying, "Their penalty will be doubled" means they will be punished twice as a result for their misguidance, injustice and evil deeds.

d. His saying, "They lost the power to hear, and they did not see" is an explanatory statement. It means they did not disbelieve, nor did they disobey Allah's command because their will supersedes Allah's will, nor is it because they have masters other than Allah, but because they were unable to hear or see His Signs, so they would believe in them.

But their inability does not mean that they are primarily incapacitated. Rather, it means that they deprived themselves of these blessings on account of the sins that they committed. So, the sins became a way for their having hearts that did not comprehend, eyes with which they could not see, ears with which they could not hear, so much so that they became like animals or even more so.

The most Praised One has said,

"They have hearts with which they do not understand, eyes with which they do not see, and ears with which they do not hear. They are like cattle! Nay, they are more misguided, for they are heedless (of warning)" (Qur'an, 7: 179).

Briefly, there is a difference between their inability at the start of the obligation and their inability to believe, to list and to see the Signs. The inability is due to their going to extremes in sinning and erring, to the sins enshrouding their hearts, eyes, visions and hearing. The verse was revealed about the second field and the first topic. Texts of verses and traditions have supported each other regarding the fact that disobedience and oppression make hearts blind and hearing deaf. The most Praised One has said,

"When they deviated, Allah then let their hearts deviate" (Qur'an, 61:5).

Narrating to us about the criminals, the most Praised One has quoted them as saying,

"They will also say, 'Had we only listened or used our intelligence, we would not have been among the companions of the blazing Fire.' They will then admit their sins, but (forgiveness) will be far from the fellows of the blazing Fire" (Qur'an, 67: 10-11).

The statement that is known to scholars of logic and of wisdom is that willful avoidance, which does not negate free choice, is derived from these verses and from commonsense.

The second verse is this:

“And He taught Adam the nature of all things; then He placed them before the angels and said, “Tell Me the nature of these (things) if you are right.” They said, “Glory to You: We have no knowledge except what You have taught us: In truth, You are perfect in knowledge and wisdom” (Qur’an, 2:31–32).

The similarity is this: The most Praised One commanded them to pronounce the names although they were not familiar with them.

Here are our reasons about the above: The command in the statement “Tell Me the nature of these (things)” was done for the purpose of proving their inability, not to require them to actually do it in reality. It is similar to this verse of the most Praised One:

“And if you are in doubt as to what We have revealed from time to time to Our servant, produce a Sura such as this, and call on your witnesses or helpers (if there are any) besides Allah, if your (doubts) are true” (Qur’an, 2:23).

Explanation: The command formula carries one meaning: driving towards a thing. But the goals vary according to situations. Once the goal behind a command is to seriously direct the attention of the adult individual to a certain act. This is the true command the doer of which is rewarded, while one who disobeys it is punished, and it has to meet the criterion of the adult person being able to do it. The other is that the goal would be other matters, so it is not labeled as the “serious command”, similarly to the incapacitating implied in the previous verse and the subjecting in the next:

“Be you apes, despised and rejected” (Qur’an, 2:65).

There are other goals that prompt a speaker to express his goals in the form of a command. This is clear for anyone who is familiar with the speech of men of wisdom.

The third verse of the most Exalted One is:

“On the Day when the shin will be laid bare, they will be summoned to bow in adoration, but they surely will not be able to do so; their eyes will be cast down, ignominy will cover them, seeing that they had been summoned previously to bow in adoration, while they were safe (and they refused)” (Qur’an, 42–43).

The indication of evidence: If it is alright to command them in the hereafter to do what is beyond their ability, the same is alright in the life of this world.

One may resign the following about the above: The call to prostrate in that circumstance is not serious and does not lie behind a reality. Rather, the purpose behind resurrection is to let the polytheists, who were able to prostrate in the life of this world and who did not, sigh a sigh of regret. The verse tells us that when they were safe, they refused to obey and surrender. After the veil had been removed from their eyes and they saw the torment, they attempted to obey and prostrate, but how could they do that in the hereafter? Here is the explanation of the verse's statements one by one:

a. His statement saying "... On the Day when the shin will be laid bare" is indicative of the matter becoming very serious because when one wants to cross tumultuous waters, he bares his legs then wades the torrent. This imagery is used in order to explain the seriousness of the matter although there is no water, shin/leg or baring to do. It is like a miser being described as having a "paralyzed hand" although the talk is neither about a hand nor about paralysis.

b. His statement saying "... They will be summoned to bow in adoration" does not imply a request or a serious command. Rather, it is to intensify their sigh for their having abandoned prostrations in the life of this world despite their physical fitness for it. It is like a teacher who is examining his student whom he knows would fail the exam: "Study, review and stay awake during the nights" in order to create a sigh in his heart although there is really no room for any of these matters.

c. His statement saying "... But they surely will not be able to do so" is due to depriving them of safety as a result of their criminal worldly deeds. Or it may be due to the aptitude of arrogance which rests deeply in their innermost—on the Day when innermost thoughts become manifest—or due to His will, the most Praised One, being linked to deeds confined to this world while the outcomes and rewards are confined to the hereafter.

The Commander of the Faithful (peace with him) has said, "This day is a course, tomorrow is the race; those who win (the race) will be lodged in Paradise, while the wrongdoers will be in Hell. So, is there anyone who repents his sin before his demise? Is there anyone who labors for his own benefit before the Day of his misery? You surely are living days of labor behind which there is a term that is already set."⁴⁴

Perhaps the first of these three viewpoints is closer to the meaning of the verse due to its end saying: "... They had been summoned previously to bow in adoration while they were safe", apparently they now are not safe because the circumstance is different.

d. His statement saying, "... Their eyes will be cast down, ignominy will cover them" clearly indicates that they will on that Day cast their eyes down, being covered with ignominy.

e. His statement saying, "... They had been summoned previously to bow in adoration, while they were safe" means when they were in the life of this world and were called on to prostrate, they refused although they were safe and their bodies were healthy. And when they will be called on to prostrate in the hereafter, they will not be able to do so. The goal behind this call is to intensify their sigh and regret

having wasted their lives while they were safe and healthy.

On the whole, the verse clearly says that the call to prostrate in the circumstance will not be serious but for other goals where ability is not preconditioned.

The fourth verse is this:

“You can never be fair and just to women, even if it is your ardent desire, but do not turn completely away (from a woman) so as to leave her hanging (in the air). If you come to a friendly understanding and practice self-restraint, Allah is oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful” (Qur’an, 4: 129).

They reason saying that it indicates that the most Praised One commands justice when He says,

“... But if you fear that you will not be able to deal justly (with them), then (marry) only one” (Qur’an, 4:3).

Nevertheless, He tells us that justice cannot be established (if one marries more than one wife).

One can resign that the most Praised One has commanded one who marries more than one wife, as the above verse indicates, to be just and fair. At the same time, He tells us in the same verse that those who marry more than one wife cannot be just. Also at the same time, He has prohibited total attachment to the one who is loved the most from among them while turning away from the others in a way that leaves the latter hanging out in a status which is neither marriage nor divorce.

If you contemplate on the statements in both verses, you will clearly see that justice, which He has enjoined, is not the same justice which He says a married man cannot shoulder.

What can be done is what anyone who marries more than wife can. Justice with regard to clothing, food, housing and other rights of the wife which the husband carries out with his faculties under his command, not with his desires and hidden wishes over which he has no control.

As regarding what is beyond one's ability, it is equality in treatment, sharing a smile and companionship, two things which one does not own, nor can he choose or control.

Up to here, it becomes clear that requiring what is beyond one's ability, whether one can do it or not, is something which reason rejects and nature denies. People of wisdom do not recognize it in their social life. Clear Quranic verses deny it.

As regarding the evidence produced by the Ashari mentor, it really contains no proof. It is simply interpreting these verses according to his own advance personal opinion. When he chose the servant's inability to affect his actions, that in all his general and particular portions belongs to Allah, the most Praised One. The servant has no role to play save being the doer of a deed, that the creation comes from Allah, Praise belongs to Him, compared to the willpower of the servant. He builds it on two matters:

First: It is possible to commission the doing of what is unbearable.

Second: Ability is relevant to actions.

As for the first, if a servant of the Almighty does not have the ability to play a role in the same deed, it makes no difference whether the commissioning is doable or not, and you have already come to know the fallacy of this argument.

As for the second, he thus concluded, due to his misconceptions, that the presence of ability and capability prior to the deed may not be combined with advocating that creating and bringing into being are not done by Him, the most Praised One. He (the Ashari), therefore, advocated the ability as taking precedence, and that it must be compared with the presence of actions. This is what we have discussed under a separate heading in our next research.

The important problem in the arguments of the Asharis, the folks of the hadith and the Hanbalis, is their rejection of reason, their exclusion of it in the fields where a judgment needs to be made. One who excludes reason and its essence cannot be expected to produce views other than these.

Pre-Actions Ability

Do both ability and capability in man precede action, or do they accompany it?

Those who advocate the principle of Justice of God are in favor of the first, whereas the Asharis support the second. What reveals what is right is to provide detail, and perhaps this is what everyone seeks.

To explain, capability is released, and it means one of two matters:

First: The soundness of doing or not doing an action. You may say, the doer being what he is; so, if he wills, he does that action, and if he does not, he will not do it. If capability is meant to be as such, there is no doubt that it precedes the deed instinctively and consciously. One who sits is capable of standing. One who is silent is capable of speaking during the time when he is silent. But the meaning is in the collective sense.

Second: That with which an action becomes necessary when all factors on which the deed's existence depends are available, when the complete cause that is not separated from the causation is present. Capability in this sense is relevant to the deed. It does not precede it time-wise even if it is ahead of it in its level.

In all truth, the issue is very simple, and the doubts raised about it, especially what is stated by the Ashari mentor in his *Al-Lama* (book), is akin to sophistry.⁴⁵ Similarly is the case with Nizam ad-Din al-Qawshaji in *Sharh al-Tajrid*.⁴⁶ The details which we have stated are decisive in this research. Its gist is clear from the writings of Fakhr ad-Din ar-Razi as transmitted by al-Sayyid al-Jurjani in *Sharh al-Mawaqif*.⁴⁷

Thus, it seems that the proofs set up by the Mutazilites about capability preceding the actions provide resigns about this issue, and the matter does not need such a detailed explanation. But what should be researched is to show the incentive that prompted al-Ashari mentor to choose that doctrine (comparing capability with actions) although precedence and comparison, as related to the contents of the Quran and Sunnah, are equal. So, the topic is determining the reason for one to opt to advocate making such a comparison, even focusing on it.

It is strongly possible that the incentive is his talk about the issue of the creation of the servants' actions, that they are created for Allah, not for the servants, neither originally nor thereafter. Even the capability that takes place to the servant, when a deed happens, does not bear an impact on bringing him into being, but it is compared to him.

So, what suits this doctrine is to deny the afore-mentioned capability over the deed and to be satisfied with that with which it is compared. It is as if the mentor imagined that the capability that precedes the actions competes with the power of Allah Almighty. So, for this reason, he found in himself a spiritual motive to prove the fallacy of such precedence and to proof the comparison.

Yes, the comparison can be advocated and the precedence is denied. This is not confined to the Ashari mentor and to his students. Rather, some Mutazilites have agreed with them such as al-Najjar, Muhammad ibn Isa, Ibn al-Rawandi and others.⁴⁸

Everyone is of the consensus that the power of Allah Almighty precedes actions. This is known according to our *usool* because the power in those other than the most Praised One is the same as ability and capability. And in what should be done, in as far as the most Praised One is concerned, is that what He does and what is needed is the same. His presence is self-sustaining and so is each of His attributes. Each does not have power on its own, capability or readiness (independently of Him).

Mulla Sadra wrote extensively in this regard in his books, removing some confusion, rebutting the saying that His ability and actions are timeless.⁴⁹

Capability in Traditions by the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt (as)

Narratives from the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt (as) have supported each other regarding capability-preceding actions. Here are some narratives reported in this regard for you:

1. Al-Saduq has quoted Hisham ibn Salim quoting Abu Abdullah (Imam al-Sadiq, peace with him) as saying, "Allah has never imposed anything on His servants to do or not to do something before making it possible for them to do it. Then He commanded them and prohibited them. So, no servant does or abstains from doing something except being in advance capable of doing so prior to being commanded or prohibited, before he does or does not, before he gives or withholds."⁵⁰

2. It has also been reported that Abu Busayr quotes Imam Abu Abdullah (as) as saying in the company

of people who were debating verbs and intonations, "Capability precedes actions. Allah, the most Exalted, the most Great, never commanded His servant to withhold anything or to release it if such servant is unable to do it."⁵¹

3. It is also narrated from Sulayman ibn Khalid saying that he heard Imam Abu Abdullah (as) as saying, "A servant of Allah does not withhold or release anything except if he is already able to do so."⁵²

4. It is also narrated from Muhammad ibn Abu Omayr quoting those who cited our fellows quoting Imam Abu Abdullah (as) as saying, "A servant of Allah does not do anything except what He enables him to do. He may be able but inactive. He can never be active without being able."⁵³ There are many other narratives that deal with the subject of such capability in the *Tawhid* book to which you may refer.

It is interesting that the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt (as) produced proofs for capability preceding actions such as this verse:

"... Pilgrimage to this place [Ka`ba] is a duty which men owe God, those who can afford the journey" (Qur'an, 3:97).

Hisham ibn al-Hakam asked Imam as-Sadiq (as) about the meaning of the afore-cited verse. The Imam (as) said, "It refers to one who is healthy of body, not being held back (from performing the pilgrimage) by any obligation, who has rations and a camel to carry him."⁵⁴

Abu Busayr has also said that he heard Imam Abu Abdullah, peace with him, as saying, "One who has the opportunity to perform the pilgrimage even if it may be on a donkey the ears and tail of which are cut off and who refuses is counted among those who are capable of performing the pilgrimage."⁵⁵

1. Al-Ishaaraat wal Tanbihaat, Vol. 1, pp. 219-220. As regarding his reference to "terms", he means things known by everyone, such as our saying: "The knowledge of opposites is one and the same." Knowledge of Zaid being the father of Amr equals knowledge of Amr being the son of Zaid. Or, if you talk about a profession, "Sequence is impossible," which is common in debates. Or you may talk about a creed and say, "The God is One, usury is prohibitive," etc.

2. Commentaries of wise Sabzawari on Sharh al-Manzouma, p. 310.

3. Kashf al-Murad, p. 186.

4. Al-Qawshaji, Sharh al-Tajreed, p. 442.

5. Kashf al-Murad, p. 186.

6. Nahjul-Balagha, Book 53.

7. Dalaail al-Sidq, Vol. 1, p. 369.

8. Al-Ashari, Al-Lama, p. 116.

9. Ibid., p. 117.

10. Kashf al-Murad, p. 186.

11. The restriction point is that the preliminary issues may either be imagined in both their ends with a sufficient rate in judgment and absolution, or it may not. The first probability covers first matters. The second may either depend on means other than outer and inner senses, or it may not. The first may either be the means that is never absent from the mind when imagining the ends or it may not be so. The first covers instinctive things, and these are called issues the measures of

which are with them. The second may either apply the senses, which is the propping intellect moving from principles to requirements, or it may not be used in them. The first is identified by the senses. As for the second, if the judgment in it takes place by a group of people telling about it, it will be up to reason to imagine that they were all in cohort to lie, so it is among matters that are consecutively reported. If it is not so, and if it takes place due to many experiments, it is experimental, and the limits of each are already known.

12. Al-Amidi, Al-Ihkam, Vol. 1, p. 121.

13. Kashf al-Murad, p. 187.

14. Refer to p. 329 of Sharh Tajrid al-Itiqad by the virtuous al-Qawshaji, where they say that man is forced in his actions. We will provide you with a detailed discussion in al-Ashari's compulsion [theory] when we discuss divine justice in a subject titled "Divine action and man's deeds."

15. We will discuss in detail the necessity for sending prophets when we discuss general Prophetic mission.

16. We will discuss Islam's conclusiveness in the researches relevant to Prophetic mission.

17. There is a host of questions about the most Exalted One's wisdom and justice which our mentor, may his shade prolong, answered in his encyclopedia titled Allah: Creator of the Cosmos; so, refer to pp. 97 – 99 and pp. 269 – 281 of it.

18. Al-Mawaqif, p. 231.

19. Isharat al-Maram, p. 54.

20. Al-Mawaqif, p. 333. Sharh al-Mawaqif, Vol. 8, p. 204.

21. Dalail Sidq, Vol. 1, p. 233.

22. Al-Mawaqif, p. 322. Sharh al-Mawaqif, Vol. 8, p. 204.

23. The Negationists المعطلة are Mutazilis المعتزلة who do not believe in resurrection and in the return of souls to bodies.

24. Al-Asfar, Vol. 2, p. 280.

25. Ibid., Vol. 7, p. 84.

26. Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 263.

27. Ibid.

28. Al-Asfar, Vol. 7, p. 68.

29. Muhammad Farid Wajdi, Ala Atlal al-Madhab al-Maddi, Vol. 1, p. 136.

30. Nahjul-Balagha, sermon 45.

31. The aspect of the most Exalted One not doing what is ugly may be determined by the fact that one does such an ugly thing either because he needs to or he relishes it or due to his own ignorance. All of these do not apply to the most Praised One: The first is discarded due to His absolute independence. The second is due to wisdom dictating its opposite. As for the third, it is due to His absolute knowledge. This evidence is based on the fact that doing what is inequitable is already proven to be unfit for Him: He is perfect in what He does. He does not need anything beyond Himself. This is endorsed by the allama on pp. 187–88 of his work Sharh al-Tajrid and by the man of virtue, al-Miqdad, on p. 260 of Sharh Nahj al-Mustarshidin and to other books dealing with logic.

32. Nahjul-Balagha, Axioms Section, No. 470.

33. Al-Tawhid, in a chapter about the meaning of Tawhid and Adl, first hadith, p. 96.

34. Ibid., p. 91.

35. Nahjul-Balagha, sermon 214.

36. Ibid., sermon 185.

37. Ibid., sermon 191.

38. Ibid., sermon 227.

39. al-Mufid, Awaail al-Maqalat, p. 14.

40. al-Saduq, Aqaid, p. 90, old edition having an appendix containing explanations in its 11th chapter.

41. Tabatabai, Al-Mizan, Vol. 1, pp. 91–93.

42. Nahjul-Balagha, sermon 22 (Abdoh edition).

43. Tabatabai, Al-Mizan, Vol. 12, p. 86.

44. Nahjul-Balagha, sermon 28.

45. Refer to Al-Lam, pp. 93–94.

46. Sharh al-Maqasid, Vol. 1, p. 240; al-Qawshaji, Sharh al-Tajrid, p. 392.
47. Sharh al-Mawaqif, Vol. 6, p. 154. The mentor, may he be safeguarded, has stated all the rational proofs produced by the Asharis in his book titled Al-Milal wal Nihal; so, refer to Vo. 2, pp. 172–193.
48. Sharh al-Mawaqif, Vol. 6, p. 92.
49. Al-Asfar al-Arba`a, Vol. 6, p. 312.
50. Al-Saduq, At-Tawhid, a chapter on capability, hadith 19, p. 352.
51. Ibid., hadith 21, p. 352.
52. Ibid., hadith 20, p. 352.
53. Ibid., hadith 13, p. 350.
54. Al-Saduq, Tawhid, hadith 14, p. 350.
55. Ibid., hadith 11, p. 350.

Chapter 6: Descriptive Attributes

Some logicians have classified the attributes of the most Praised One into entitative and descriptive. The first implies His well known descriptions: knowledge, power, life, etc. The second indicates what obvious verses and traditions have confirmed, such as loftiness, countenance, hands, etc. The logicians' theory has differed in explaining this part of attributes:

Confirming with “How” and “Like”

There are those who claim that Allah, the most Praised One, has physical things such as two eyes and hands similarly to what humans have. Al-Shahristani says, “As for the anthropomorphists (those who attribute human characteristics to nonhuman objects), who are Hashwis (those who prattle about things which they themselves do not understand, i.e. sophistries), these have permitted the concept that their Lord is touched and is hand-shaken, that sincere Muslims embrace Him, Praise belongs to Him, in the life of this world and in the hereafter if they reach a degree of self-discipline and struggle to the extent of sincerity.”¹

Since likening and personifying the Almighty is false according to reason and reliable texts, we do not want to waste our time discussing this theory.

Confirming without “How” and “Like”

The Ashari mentor and those who follow him apply these characteristics to Allah, Glory to Him, in the meaning with which we all are familiar. But in order to run away from likening Him to humans, they say “without like”, “without how”.

In his book titled Al-Ibana, al-Ashari says, “Allah, Glory to Him, has a face without a likeness as He has

said,

‘But the Face of your Lord shall abide (forever) full of majesty, bounty and honor’ (Qur’an, 55:27).

He has hands without a likeness as He has said,

‘... one whom I have created with My hands’ (Qur’an, 38:75).”²

This theory is not exclusively advocated by al-Ashari. Abu Hanifah is quoted as having said, “References in the Holy Quran to Allah Almighty having a face, a hand, a self, are His characteristics without a likeness.”

Ibn Kathir has said, “We follow the path of the righteous ancestors which is: believing in them as they have come without how or like.”³

This theory’s summary is that these facts belong to Him, the most Praised One that He is, but they are not similar to what exist in humans. He has a hand and an eye but not similarly to our hands and eyes. Thus, they, according to their own claim, combined the apparent meanings of these verses with the requirement of raising the status of the Almighty above that of humans.

Theory Analyzed

Undoubtedly, everyone must believe in what Allah has described Himself, and nobody knows Him better than Himself. The most Praised One says,

“Do you know better than Allah?” (Qur’an, 2:140).

Also, nobody has the right to speak about the statements of the most Praised One in any topic superficially without definitive evidence that requires it. What is said by those who interpret Quranic verses, who try to explain what appears to them to be the meanings embedded in the Quran and Sunnah in the pretext their apparent meanings do not agree with reason is rejected, rebutted.

What the Quran and authentic Sunnah contain does not contradict reason. What they imagine superficially and make it look irrational is not the apparent meaning of the Quran but what they themselves imagine it to be, as will be clarified.

The statements made by the Asharis in this theory, their saying that Allah has a real hand without how, for example, is not based on a sound meaning. This is so because the Islamic faith is characterized by precision and discretion and, at the same time, by being free of complexity and ambiguity. It seems to be clear, in agreement with nature and sound reason.

Thereupon, portraying it in a likening and personifying way that is known to belong to Judaism and Christianity, as is the case in the first theory, or in a way similarly to ambiguity and riddles, as in this

case, does not agree with the stance of Islam and with that of the Quran in presenting the beliefs to the Islamic society.

To say that Allah has a hand that is not similar to ours, or a face that is not like our faces, and so on with the rest of descriptive characteristics, is similar to uttering riddles. Their repeating that these attributes are applied to Allah, the most Praised One, in their same real meanings, but the method is unknown, is akin to a farce. Had they been applied to Allah Almighty in their same real meanings, the method should have been known, so the application would have been real. This is so because the one who used these expressions applied the same method to their “how”. So, using them in the same meanings, fixing their meanings to Allah, the most Praised One, without “how”, is similar to an animal which is a real lion but without a tail, claws, fangs, etc., etc.

Briefly, their saying that Allah has a real hand but not similar to (human) hands is a statement the front of which contradicts the rear. A true hand is an organ that has the well known “how”. Eliminating the “how” is eliminating its reality; they cannot be combined.

Add to the above the fact that there are no texts in the Quran or Sunnah like this “without how” at all. Rather, this is something invented by ideologies to shield themselves in the stance for deterring an opponent from attacking them, accusing them of the charge of personification. For this reason, allama al-Zamakhshari has composed this verse of poetry:

*They likened Him to His creation, then they were apprehensive
Of people, so they hid themselves behind this “without how”.*

I wonder, had this phrase sufficed to rebut the charge of personifying and likening, if it suffices in other fields as well such as He, the most Praised One, is said to have a body but not like all other bodies, blood but not like other blood, flesh but not like other flesh, etc. Even one of those who dared to liken Him has said, “I am too shy to confirm that He has sexual organs and a beard, so excuse me from having to do so and ask what is beyond that.”⁴

Thus, it is quite clear that the Ashari’s belief in the area of descriptive attributes is not out of the framework of one of two following matters:

1. Personifying and likening if applied to Allah, Glory to Him, in their common meanings in minds while preserving their reality,
2. Complication and ambiguity if applied to Allah, Glory to Him, in the common meanings without interpretation and explanation. People either liken or complicate, personify or blabber!

In conclusion, we say that the “proving without how”, though widely spread during, before and after al-Ashari’s time, was later deserted until Ibn Taymiyyah al-Harrani came. He brought it back to life, revived and called it the doctrine of the ancestry, making their faith one of idling and likening.

In a statement he said, “They do not represent the attributes of Allah Almighty similarly to His creation, nor do they deny what He has described Himself or His Messenger described Him lest they should nullify His Beautiful Names and Supreme Attributes.” He goes on to say, “Nobody from among the nation’s ancestors, from among the *sahaba* and *tabiin*, ever said that Allah is not in the heavens, nor is He not on the *Arsh*, or that He is not everywhere, nor that all places with Him are the same, nor is He inside or outside the world, connected with or separated from it, nor that it is not permissible to point at Him with fingers and the like.”⁵

Thereupon, Abu Zuhrah says, “Ibn Taymiyyah determines that the creed of the ancestors is to confirm whatever the Quran contains, what is high and what is low, the Almighty firming Himself on the Throne, His face, hand, love and hate and whatever the Sunnah contains of the same without interpretation and with literal appearance. Is this truly the creed of the ancestors?!”

We answer by saying: The Hanbalis of the fourth Hijri century, as we explained, had preceded him in saying so. Scholars of the time debated with them and proved that the likening and personifying to which they were leading were impossible. So, how can they not lead to Him while it is permissible to point at him with the senses?! For this reason, the Hanbali faqih and imam, al-Khatib ibn al-Jawzi, confronted them and denied that this had anything to do with the ancestors’ creed.”⁶

Ibn al-Jawzi has made a detailed statement criticizing this theory, attacking one of the Hanbalis who propagated it, namely Abu Yali, the famous judge who died in 457 A.H./1065 A.D. He said, “Abu Yali attached a stigma to the Hanbalis which cannot be washed away by sea water.” For this reason, this sect went underground till it was made public by Ibn Taymiyyah in his own special daring way.

Contemporary Abu Zuhrah moved to what we stated about criticizing that theory saying, “We have to cast another look from the linguistic standpoint. The most Praised One has said, ‘Allah’s hand is above their hands.’ He also said, ‘Everything perishes save His face.’ Do these statements convey physical meanings, or do they convey to us the sense that there are other matters that appropriately fit Allah Almighty? It is right to interpret the hand as meaning power (literally or metaphorically), and it is right to say that reference to the face connotes the Self.

“It is right to interpret His descent to the lower heavens as meaning that His account is approaching, that He, the most Praised and Exalted One, is close to His servants. Language makes room for such interpretations; pronouncements accept such meanings. This undoubtedly is better than interpreting them through their literal apparent meanings while being ignorant of how, such as saying, ‘Allah has a hand but we do not know it,’ or ‘Allah descends but not as we descend,’ etc.

These refer to the unknown; we do not understand their ultimate end or goal. But if we interpret them with meanings which language accepts and they are not strange to language, we will arrive at matters that are close to them and which contain elevation of His status rather than misleading.”⁷

Al-Ghazali has strongly criticized this theory. Summed up, he says the following:

“These expressions in the Quranic statements and Prophet’s traditions have apparent meanings which are related to the senses we know, and they are impossible to apply to Allah Almighty. They have other metaphoric meanings known by an Arab without interpretation or an attempt to interpret them.

If he hears a reference to the hand in a statement by the Prophet, peace and blessings with him and his progeny, that ‘Allah outfitted Adam with His hand’ and ‘A believer’s heart is between two of the Merciful One’s fingers,’ he should know that these expressions convey two meanings. One of them is the original condition: an organ comprised of flesh, bone and nerves.

This expression, the hand, may be used metaphorically for another meaning that differs from this physical meaning such as someone saying that ‘The town is in the hand of the governor.’ This conveys an understanding even if the governor’s hand is cut off. A commoner and anyone else must make sure that the Messenger of Allah (S) did not mean a physical body, which this is impossible to apply to Allah. If he imagines that Allah is a body comprised of parts, he will be worshipping an idol, for every body is created, and one who worships a created thing commits apostasy. Idol worship was apostasy because idols are created things.”⁸

Al-Ghazali did well when he interpreted the hand in a verse such as this: “Allah’s hand is above their hands” to mean ability, a meaning for the verse without interpreting it, an explanation for it without attempting to explain it. This will be our focus after we discuss the faith of those who interpret.

We say that what must be done is to follow the appearance of the verse and of the Sunnah without deviating from it, whether or not it agrees with literal meanings or with individual meanings, and this is the great slippage of the Hanbalis and of Imam al-Ashari himself. They claimed that their literal meanings must be adopted whether they agree with what is apparent or not.

Rendering

A group of Asharis and others applied these characteristics to Allah, Glory to Him, while rendering their meanings to Him.

Al-Shahristani has said,

“A large group from among the ancestors confirm descriptive attributes, such as the hands and face, without interpreting them. They say, ‘We do not know the meaning of the expression such as in the verse saying: The most Merciful One is firmly seated on the *Arsh*, and like: ... to what I have created with My hand. We are not obligated to know the explanation of these verses, but we have already been required to believe that He has no partner, something which we have already proven.”⁹

To this viewpoint did ar-Razi incline when he said,

“These similarities must definitely be seen as having meanings other than what they apparently convey

(on the surface). We must also render their meaning to Allah Almighty, and their interpretation must not be discussed.”¹⁰

Analyzing Rendering Theory

Rendering is the slogan of one who does not want to undertake the hardship of conducting serious researches and who sees that suffices him to attain salvation is the statement of the Messenger of Allah (Allah’s peace and blessings with him and his progeny) in which he said, ‘Islam is based on five things: The testimony that: There is no god save Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, the upholding of the (daily) prayers, the paying of zakat, the performing of the hajj and the fasting of the month of Ramadan.’¹¹

Because he sees rendering as safer than confirming, which may end up at either making a similitude or a personification, both being false, or to complication and ambiguity which both do not agree with the attribute of the ease of the faith.

But the folks of confirmation, I mean those who advocate the two previous theories, have criticized the rendering theory saying that its goal is mere belief in the expressions of the Quran and hadith without an in–depth research or the comprehending of what Allah and His Messenger mean by them.

To believe in pronouncements while rendering their meanings to Allah, the most Glorified One, is the same as saying that Allah Almighty addressed us arbitrarily because He addressed us with things which we do not understand. But Allah says,

“We did not send a Messenger except (to teach) in the language of his own people” (Qur’an, 14:4).¹²

I say that those who advocate such rendering have a clear excuse in this regard. They imagine that the verses containing descriptive attributes are among the “like” verses the interpretation of which is prohibited by the most Praised One Who commanded His servants to just believe in them. He says,

“But those with perversity in their hearts follow its allegorical parts, seeking discord and searching for their hidden meanings, but no one knows its hidden meanings except Allah and those who are firmly grounded in knowledge. Say, ‘We believe in the Book; the whole of it is from our Lord’. None will grasp the message except men of understanding” (Qur’an, 3:7).

They are not to be blamed when they refuse to interpret them, so they rendered their meanings to Him, the most Praised One. Yes, there is confusion about these verses actually not being allegorical. They are not meant to be allegorical. If one who is free of any prior notion discerns them, he will find them non–allegorical, as you will come to know later.

What is strange is that their criticism of those who advocate rendering applies also to them. Firming the

descriptive attributes in their literal meanings that come to one's mind when he reads them individually, while still believing that the Almighty is above being physical, empties their words of clear meanings. This is so because the impression these attributes give makes up the basis for their meanings.

Trying to firm their literal meanings, while robbing them of their ways, is like confirming something by negating it. Then, the verses that convey the best and greatest meanings turn into incomprehensible and illogical ones, as if Allah Almighty addressed them while they are illiterate knowing nothing of the Book other than their wishful thinking.

Interpretation

The Mutazilites are the ones who are famous for this theory. They interpret the "hand" as blessing and power, and they interpret His seating Himself firmly on the *Arsh* (Throne) as taking control and demonstrating ability. The truth about interpreting this verse will become clear when we quote statements in *Al-Kashaf* exegesis which was written in a Mutazilite style.

One may resign in their regard by saying that interpreting the verses' texts and apparent meanings, while not looking into the sources of the descriptive attributes, is no less dangerous than the confirmation theory, for interpretation may reach the extent of atheism and a denial of the Sharia. 13

How ugly it is to say that "The apparent meaning of the Quran violates sound reason, so quotation must be abandoned for the sake of clear reason"!

Or one may say, "Upholding the principles of beliefs through mere superficial meanings of the Quran and Sunnah without applying discretion is the root of misguidance, so they advocated likening, personifying and the like, acting on the superficial meaning of the verse that says 'The most Merciful One is firmly seated on the *Arsh*'." 14

This is so because there is no verse in the Holy Quran the apparent meaning of which contradicts sound reason. What they imagine to be apparent is not so. Rather, the verse conveys a meaning that differs from what they imagined. They mixed the literal apparent meaning with the meaning of the verse as a whole.

The hand is obvious in the special part, but it is not so when evidences are attached to it, making it appear in another meaning. One may praise someone by saying, "He is open-handed", or he may speak ill of him by saying that he withholds his hand. Apparently, it is not a reference to the hand, the bodily part, which we literally call as such. Rather, it obviously connotes giving, generosity, or the opposite: miserliness and stinginess even if one's hand may actually be lopped off. If the sentence is given a meaning differently from this, it will be giving it a different connotation.

Thereupon, what those who interpret say must be examined. If their interpretations are similar to what we have already stated, that is, making a distinction between the meaning conveyed by the entire

sentence and the individual meaning, these do not interpret. Rather, they follow the appearance of the Quran and Sunnah.

It is not right to name the explanation of the Holy Quran, in the light of the evidences that exist in it, as interpretation. Rather, it is following the texts and the appearances. But if their interpreting is done by inventing meanings for the verses without such verses containing evidences connected and leading to them, they indeed interpret. Interpreting is no less serious in firming conclusions by either personifying or complicating or confusing.

Briefly, what must be emphasized is that on the whole (adherence to the Quran and Sunnah) is taken for granted. So, everyone must follow the Holy Quran without making any adjustments or alterations, without behaving on his own or interpreting. As regarding the smaller issue, that is, identifying what is apparent and what is not, all bad consequences are removed through it.

Had the leaders of the Islamic sects and intellectuals abandoned their advance views and inherited ideologies and instead focused on diagnosing what is apparent and what is not according to sound criteria, an end would have been put to people's arguments and to debates about the attributes which went on for hundreds of years. Those debates originated from nothing other than preferring inclinations to the truth.

Procedure According to the Testifying Concept

The truth about this theory is a verse's meaning, objective and testifying (not depicting) gist then describing the most Praised One through the overall concept that we understand without firming the literal meaning of attributes or their interpretation.

Explanation: Vocabulary words are judged and used by individuals. Words in sentences have another appearance. Both appearances may unite with or contrast each other. Undoubtedly, if you say "lion", it will be understood as a reference to a beast. Also, if you say, "I saw a lion in the woods," the same meaning will come to mind as that from the single word.

But if you say, "I saw a lion shooting (darts)," your statement will convey a different literal and individual meaning from the word, which is the predatory beast. Rather, it will be understood contrarily to the outer appearance. Conveying it's meaning and interpreting it as a hero shooting (arrows) during a fighting is explaining the appearance of the sentence without interpretation.

If a genuine Arab hears this verse of poetry spoken by a poet:

... With a lion toting its weapon, experienced, having pads, its nails unclipped...

He will not doubt that by "lion" a valiant hero is meant who forces himself through the fighting fronts, not the predatory beast. The same happens if he hears someone saying,

A lion against me, while in the wars he is an ostrich that is easy to scare, it jumps out of fear if it hears a while.

He will not hesitate to think that the sought meaning of the above verse is a man who pretends to be brave before the weak, who is scared and who turns on his heels on meeting heroes. We are not right if we accuse one who interprets both verses as referring to a brave one or one who pretends to be brave that he interprets. Rather, he confirms the meaning without interpretation or alteration.

We have to be acquainted with confirming the meaning and fixing it for Allah, Glory belongs to Him, rather than sticking to the literal imagined meaning, confirming or denying it as having anything to do with Allah, Praise belongs to Him. Had these folks looked for the meaning of the verses stripped of prior notions, they would have come to know the confirming appearance and fixed it for Allah, Praise belongs to Him, without any stigma of interpretation or mishandling or the dire consequence of personifying and likening Him.

In order to show you an example of this type of research, we will focus on the sources of whatever falls in the field of discussion between those who firm and those who interpret. We will keep doing so until it becomes clear that confirming the meaning adopted by those who confirm, and interpreting and dealing with this norm that the interpreters have committed, is neither sound nor complete. Rather, there is only confirmation that He cannot be personified, seen as ambiguous or interpreted.

His Arsh, Praise Belongs to Him, and How He firmly Seats Himself on It

One of His Attributes, Praise belongs to Him, is that He firmly seats Himself on His *Arsh* (Throne). This description occurs in many verses. It is repeated in the Holy Quran twenty-two times. The word "*Arsh*" exists once, and the rest of verses refer (indirectly) to His *Arsh*, Praise belongs to Him, save in two verses:

"... (She is) provided with every requisite, and she has a magnificent throne" (Qur'an, 27:23)

and:

"He raised his parents high on the throne" (Qur'an, 12:100).

His being "firmly seated" occurs twelve times. With the exception of three verses, they all refer to the most Praised One firmly seating Himself on the *Arsh*.

People of hadith, supported by al-Ashari, have claimed that the verses are clear in their indication that the most Praised One has a Throne and that He firmly seats Himself on it but it is not known how. Those who advocate anthropomorphism endorsed the theory of the hadith folks of accepting the superficial meaning without saying that the "how" is unknown.

This matter stirred in Islamic circles a great deal of fuss and a dispute between the attributers and the interpreters. We say: Had the researchers carefully discerned these verses stripped of their inherited beliefs, they would have understood their implications. They do not support those who describe His attributes and who say that He, Praise belongs to Him, has a throne, a seat having legs placed in the heavens on which Allah sits, while “how” is either known or unknown.

And they would not have supported the interpreters who explain the verse as meaning that it needs another verse to prove that it means something else other than its apparent meaning. Rather, the evidences that exist in some of these verses vest on the verse an appearance that conveys the desired meaning without violating the dignity of the revelation, nor does it refer to or employ interpretation. The verses do not need interpretation, that is, understanding them as having meanings that the appearances of the verses do not convey.

There is no doubt that the literal meaning of the *Arsh* is known to everyone without any confusion.

Ibn Faris has said, “The *Arsh* is one term that indicates the loftiness of something built, then it is used metaphorically. Al-Khalil (ibn Ahmed al-Farahidi, the renown linguist) has used the term ‘the king’s seat’ which is correct. Allah Almighty has said,

“... He raised his parents high on the throne” (Qur’an, 12:100).

Then it was used metaphorically: One’s command and caretaking is labeled as an *arsh*. If he is deposed, it is said that his *arsh* collapsed. Zuhair has composed this verse of poetry:

*You went to the rescue of the coalitions whose arsh collapsed,
And did so to Thubyan whose feet slipped away from the sandal.”*¹⁵

“Firmly seating” is known in the language; it is empowering and enabling. Al-Raghib has said the following in his Mufradat: “Firmly seated is seen in two ways: One of them is rendered to two doers and more such as: Zaid and Amr are equal in such-and-such a thing. The Almighty has said, ‘They are not equal with Allah’. The second is that a thing being straight by itself, as in the verse:

“Endowed with wisdom, he appeared (in a stately form)” (Qur’an, 53:6),

‘When you are seated stately...’, ‘... so you may seat yourselves on their backs’ and ‘... when it is firm on its stem...’ All convey the meaning of control such as in this verse:

“(Allah) the Most Gracious is firmly established on the throne (of authority)” (Qur’an, 20:5).¹⁶

Our focus is that the firm establishment in the verse cited above does not indicate an apparent sense of sitting, on depending on something. Rather, it means control, full ability, a connotation for the expanse of His ability and management. The establishment is used in this sense in many verses of poetry. Al-Akhtal said the following verses in praise of Bishr, brother of Abdul-Malik ibn Marwan, when the latter took

charge of Iraq:

*Then Bishr seized control of Iraq
Without a sword or blood to shed. 17*

Another poet said,

*When we rose and took control of them,
We left them prey to eagles and to beasts.*

What is meant by the first verse is Bishr taking control of Iraq, and in the second verse there is a reference to vanquishing the foe. Height here is not physical; it is an abstract.

If all this is known, we say that if we adopt the literal meaning of the *Arsh*, as one would have done when he reads this verse by the most Praised One:

“... and she has a magnificent throne” (Qur’an, 27:23),

we must say that Allah, Praise is due to Him, has a throne like that of kings and sultans. It is then that the meaning of His seating Himself on it becomes possible.

But if we abandon this meaning and say that the apparent meaning is truly believing in the verse literally, which comes to mind from the verse as a whole after discerning the evidences that surround the sentence, the verse will connote His taking control of His domain in the life of this world and in the Hereafter and His management without help from anyone at all.

The sentences that occur in many verses talking about His firming Himself on the *Arsh* indicate that the sought meaning is the second, not the first. They confirm that the objective is His management in a way which overwhelms everything, be it minutely small or magnanimous, and that the most Praised One is the Creator and also the Administrator.

In order to explain the extent of His administration, the truth of which nobody can grasp, He made a comparison between what is conceived and what is felt. This is the management of kings and sultans of their kingdoms as they recline on their thrones surrounded by their ministers. But their management is legislated, canonized, whereas His management is creative.

Two matters provide evidence to the above:

First: The most Praised One refers in many verses to management after stating His seating Himself on the *Arsh*. He once provides the word “management” and once His testimony and another reality. As regarding the reference to managing per se, the most Praised One says,

“Truly your Lord is Allah Who created the heavens and the earth in six days and is firmly established on the throne (of authority), regulating and governing all things. No intercessor (can

plead with Him) except with His leave. This is Allah your Lord; therefore, worship Him: Will you not celebrate His praises?" (Qur'an, 10:3)

"Allah is He Who raised the heavens with no pillars that you can see; He is firmly established on the throne (of authority); He has subjected the sun and the moon (to His law)! Each runs (its course) for an appointed term. He regulates affairs, explaining the Signs in detail, so that you may believe with certainty in the meeting with your Lord" (Qur'an, 13:2).

It is Allah Who has created the heavens and the earth, and all between them, in six days, and He is firmly established on the throne (of authority): You have none, besides Him, to protect or intercede (for you): will you then not receive admonishment? He regulates (all) affairs from the heavens to the earth" (Qur'an, 32:4-5).

In the first verse, the most Praised One arranges His phrase "firmly established on the throne" so the meaning may be "established (Himself) on the throne of management." In the second verse, after mentioning some (aspects) of management, getting the sun and the moon to do as He instructs them..., He provides a total command for His management when He says "regulating and governing all things", similarly to the case with the third verse.

As regarding reference to the truth of His management without naming it, it is like this statement of the most Praised One:

"Your Guardian-Lord is Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days and is firmly established on the throne (of authority): He draws the night over the day like a veil, each seeking the other in a rapid succession: He created the sun, the moon and the stars, (all) governed by laws under His command. Is it not His to create and to govern? Blessed be Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds!" (Qur'an, 7:54).

He says, "He draws the night over the day like a veil" to refer to the reality of His management, to provide us with examples for it, then He explains for us a total principle when He says: "Is it not His to create and to govern?", that is, it is to Him that both creating and governing are rendered.

You may measure on both of these groups the rest of verses. In all of them, there is a hint to the management matter either with a word or a testimony to it, even His saying, the most Praised One that He is,

"Then, when one blast is sounded on the trumpet, the earth is moved, and its mountains are crushed to powder in one stroke. On that Day, the (great) event shall come to pass, and the sky will be rent asunder, for it will be flimsy that Day, and the angels will be on its sides, and that Day, eight [angels] will bear your Lord's throne above them all. That Day you will be brought to Judgment: Not a single one of your acts that you hide will remain concealed" (Qur'an, 69: 13-18).

The *Arsh* in this verse is one of management, of administering the affairs of the domain on a Day when none judges save He. The most Exalted One has said,

“...Whose dominion will it be that Day? God's, the One, the Supreme!” (Qur'an, 40: 16).

The most Praised One has also said,

“(On) the Day the trumpet is blown, the dominion will be His” (Qur'an, 6:73).

These verses indicate one meaning: depicting the control of the Almighty's judge on that horrific day.

The most Praised One has said,

“Is not the command His? And He is the swiftest in taking account” (Qur'an, 6:62),

and

“There, the (only) protection comes from Allah, the True One. He is the best to reward, and the best to grant success” (Qur'an, 18:44).

One who ponders on these verses will find out that they aim at one fact: The creation of the heavens and earth did not render their Creator too weak to administer and manage the affairs. As for His “seating” Himself on the throne, in its literal sense, it is not what these verses mean at all.

Second: The expression of firm sitting on the throne occurs in seven verses jointly with the mention of one of His deeds, which is the raising of the heavens without pillars, or the creating of the heavens and earth and what is in-between them in six days, or the like. This proves that what is meant by it is not a place to sit but seizing and controlling the whole world. Just as there is no partner with Him in creating and bringing into being, there is also no partner with Him in ruling and controlling. For this reason, He restricts management to His own self just as creating exclusively belongs to Him:

“Indeed, it is He Who creates and Who governs. Blessed be Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds!” (Qur'an, 7:54).

Remaining stagnant at the meanings of individual words, abandoning contemplating and delving deeply into their meanings, is an innovation that leads to obvious apostasy. Even one who interprets this verse, falls into the dire consequence of *shirk* and its traps:

“There is nothing whatever like Him” (Qur'an, 42: 11).

Relying on the traditions narrated by Ibn Khuzaymah and those who follow him is relying on roots that are traced to the Jews and Christians. Ar-Razi has said the following about Ibn Khuzaymah and his book, which is known as *Tawhid*: “Be informed that Muhammad ibn Ishaq ibn Khuzaymah cited our fellows' argument through this verse: ‘There is nothing whatever like Him’ in the book which he called *Tawhid* which, in fact, is a book about *shirk*, objecting to them. I remember the gist of his statement after

deleting the verbosity because he was a man who used to stumble in his speech, of a limited comprehension and a feeble mind.”¹⁸

Due to the countless references to likening and personifying, the discussions about fate and fatalism, which it contains, Dr. Ahmed Amin has said,

“In my opinion, had the teachings of the Mutazilites prevailed till this day, the Muslims would have had a different stance in history from their present one, and they would have been incapacitated by surrender; fatalism would have paralyzed them and complacency would have immobilized them.”¹⁹

In my opinion, had the freedom of thought prevailed among the Muslims, had the Muslims risen above any prior notion which they inherited from the hadith advocates, had they looked at the Almighty’s Book and upheld the authentic Sunnah narrated about the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah with him and his progeny) through the venue of his Household (peace with them), whom the Messenger identified in his consecutively reported tradition known as hadith al-thaqalayn (hadith of the two weighty things, i.e. the Holy Quran and the Ahl al-Bayt)..., the Muslims would have had a status in history which is different from the present one.

In the light of the above determined criterion and balance can you interpret the text of the Holy Quran when it refers to the countenance, eye, hands, side (of the Almighty), when He comes and goes, ascends and descends and the like without violating its dignity and without arriving at cold, inaccurate and superficial interpretations of its verses. You will then follow the norm of believing in these verses but not literally or as some people imagine.

Countenance of the Most Praised One

You have already come to know that al-Ashari has said the following in his book titled Al-Ibana: “Allah has a face without how just as He has said,

‘But the Face of your Lord shall abide (forever) full of majesty, bounty and honor’ (Qur’an, 55:27).’

He means to prove that Allah, all Praise is due to Him, has a face in the literal meaning of the word. Running away from coining a similitude for it, he appends to his statement the phrase “without how”.

Those who interpret believe that this verse must be interpreted. They say that it has to be interpreted through itself. But what those who interpret have said, though accurate in its outcome, the verse needs no interpretation. Rather, it needs it if we suppose that the face appears as the specific organ. If it appears, because of the evidence that we will mention, in the same thing, in its person, it does not need interpretation, and the apparent meaning will be applied.

The evidence for the above is that the face, as we will discuss, comes in the sense of a special physical part; it comes to mean the self. Ibn Faris has said, “One may be referred to by pointing out to his face as

has been said (in poetry):

*I seek Allah's forgiveness for sins beyond my count indeed,
Lord of the servants, His is the face and the deed."*²⁰

Perhaps the face expression connotes the self. Man's face, or anything's "face", is his/its full reality in the eyes of the beholder. For this reason, if one sees someone else's face, he says that he saw him, as if by seeing the face he sees the whole self. Thereupon, the expression needs to be understood by one of the two meanings to its likeness because the second meaning, due to so much usage, has reached the extent of reality.

The evidence points to the second meaning: The Almighty has described the face as being "full of majesty, bounty and honor", attributes which belong to the Lord, that is, His own Self, not attributes of the face, I mean a portion of a whole. Had the face here meant the specific part, the "majesty, bounty and honor" should describe the Lord (to Whom they are added).

For this reason, we see that the most Praised One has made it descriptive of what is added to it, in this case the Lord. In another verse, the most Praised One says, "Blessed is the Name of your Lord, the One with majesty, bounty and honor". It is known that the "Name" is not the one to which this description applies but to the One to Whose Face the verse refers, that is, the same Lord. You will get an extensive explanation when the most Praised One is discussed and that He is not a body in the category of negative attributes.

There is a statement narrated about the greatest Messenger of Allah (S) which is: "Allah created Adam in his form." This is seen by some as proving through similitude that Allah, the most Praised One, has a form in the likeness of which He created Adam. But had these folks referred to the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt (as), they would have found out that this hadith is chopped off. Al-Saduq, through his *isnad* to Imam Ali (as), has said that the Prophet (S) heard a man saying this to another man: "May Allah turn your face and that of anyone who looks like you ugly." The Prophet (S) said to the man, "Wait! Do not say it! Allah created Adam looking like this man."²¹

That is to say, the Prophet (S) meant to say to the man, "You are taunting this man as well as the man who looks like him: Adam (as)."

He has also quoted al-Hussain ibn Khalid as saying that he said the following to Imam al-Ridha (peace with him): "O son of the Messenger of Allah! People narrate saying that the Messenger of Allah said that Allah created Adam according to His own image." The Imam (as) said, "May Allah wage war on them! They chopped off the beginning of the hadith. The Messenger of Allah passed by two men taunting each other. He heard one of them saying to the other, 'May Allah turn your face and that of anyone who looks like you ugly', so he, peace and blessings of Allah with him and his progeny, said to him, 'O servant of Allah! Do not say this to your brother. Allah, the most Exalted One, the most Praised, created Adam similarly to his own creation."²²

Hands of the Most Praised One

Imam al-Ashari has said, "Allah, Praise belongs to Him, has two hands without how as He has said:

"... whom I created with both My hands' (Qur'an, 38:75)."

He means to refer to the hand in its literal sense, individually, but in order to avoid making a similitude for it, he goes on to say "without how".

Undoubtedly, if the hand or hands is/are referred to individually, one will immediately conceive them as a physical body part. But this is an individual appearance, and it is not followed except if it appears in a way where it is correctly applied. But if both the term and what it describes disagree with each other, what is followed is the second option, for it may appear to be something else. Here is an explanation for you:

It may appear as connoting power. The most Praised One says,

"Remember Our servant David, the man of strength, for he always turned (to Allah)" (Qur'an, 38: 17)

(where the original Arabic text of the phrase "the man of strength" literally reads: "the man with the hand"). Undoubtedly, it is not meant to refer to the particular body part but connotes strength. It is similar to saying, "So-and-so has a hand over such-and-such" or "What should I do with such a hand?" A poet has said,

*For what would you do, when attempting to reach what is high
One who has no hands at all to reach it by?!*

With such a meaning, the poet regards time and the wind as having hands. It is said, "the hand of destiny". A poet refers to strength by saying, "In its left hand is its rein" due to its strength.

It may be obvious in the bliss such as one may say, "One has with me many hands," that is, favors and acts of benevolence. Or he may say, "He has with me a white hand," that is, a bliss. A poet has said, "He has with me a hand and a blessing." So, is it right to interpret the hand in both of these places as referring to this bodily part while charging those who interpret it as connoting strength in the first place and a bliss in the second of interpreting and distorting the verse? No, not at all.

Thus, the accuracy of what we have said becomes obvious, that is, what is followed is not the individual appearance but the connotation. Do you not see how the most Praised One attributes "trickery", "plotting" and "forgetfulness" to Himself, Praise belongs to Him, in many verses including this one:

وَيَمْكُرُونَ وَيَمْكُرُ اللَّهُ، وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الْمَاكِرِينَ

They plot and plan, and Allah also plans, but Allah is the best of planners (Qur'an, 8:30)

The individual and literal meaning of this word, i.e. مكر, is trickery. It is known that tricking is the method of the incapacitated person, Allah is High above it. But the obvious connotation prevents the individual meaning because the verse and its likes serve the function of describing causing problems, something which the Arabs and non-Arabs use in their language a good deal.

We cannot apply the literal meaning in the pretext it must bear Allah's speech as it shows and we must not interpret or alter it. We also say that we must understand what appears to be the meaning of what Allah says, but what they claim to be the appearance is not that of the verse but of one word in the verse. What is followed is the connotation, the meaning within the sentence, which is strength in the first place and blessing in the second.

If you absorb what we have stated, this (phrase in the) verse must be discerned: "... to what I have created in my own hands" since the scholars of exegesis have opinions about it:

- a) The hand as meaning ability
- b) The hand as meaning a blessing

He gave them the meaning that Allah's power is one. So, what is the need to follow it with the phrase "with My own hand", especially since the blessings of Allah, Praise belongs to Him, are countless, so why did He refer to His hand?

- c) The hands as connoting ability and bliss; through this meaning does the previous confusion disappear.

I say that had evidences indicated that the verse shows that its apparent meaning must be taken, it would have been so, and you would not have come to know that the appearance is the connotation, rather than the individual meaning. But such evidences are not there according to us.

- d) Accepting the linguistic meaning, but it indicates that the most Praised One, rather than anyone else, is the Master of His creatures. Most actions done by those who have two hands are thus done, so doing things with the hands has prevailed on all other actions that are done through other ways, so much so that even what the heart does is referred to as "It is what your hands have done". If someone reviles someone else, so he is dealt with accordingly, it will be said to him: "This is what your hands have offered." Even one who has lost his hands is told that his hands have committed harm and his mouth had blown (into ashes to spark fire). An example is this verse by the most Praised One:

"Do they not see that it is We Who have created with Our hands for them cattle which We have

placed under their command?" (Qur'an, 36:71).

If you come to know all of this, the verse's objective becomes clear which is: The most Praised One denounces Satan saying: "Since you did not prostrate to Adam, although I created him and brought him into existence, and I know about his status and the reasons why I ordered you and the angels to prostrate to him, did you feel haughty before Me, or do you regard yourself to be among those whose status is higher than his?"

The proof that creating with the hands connotes the most Praised One undertaking the process of creation by Himself, not creating him and His other creatures through bodily organs called "hands", is that the reason behind Satan refusing to prostrate to what the most Praise One had made had nothing to do with His creating him (Adam) with the special bodily part, the hand, so as if He had created him by something else, Satan would not have objected and refused to prostrate to him.

The criterion is objection to prostrating to what the most Praised One created without paying attention to the "tool" with which He created him.

If it was said, "If He is the Initiator and the One Who creates all humans, why did He specify Adam by saying that He created him by Himself?", we would say this:

Adding and specifying are done to demonstrate his (Adam's) honor and distinction as well as how awful Satan's deed was. It is similar to what the most Praised One says in this verse:

"Once I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit, fall down in obeisance to him" (Qur'an, 29: 15).

Specifying the connection is to show how the most Praised One is honoring him. It is also like this verse:

"... sanctify My House for those who compass it around, or use it as a retreat, or bow, or prostrate themselves (in it in prayer)" (Qur'an, 2: 125).

Similarly to what is stated above is the verse that says,

"Truly those who pledge their fealty to you do no less than pledging their fealty to Allah: God's hand is above their hands: Then anyone who violates his oath does so to the harm of his own soul, and anyone who fulfills what he has promised God, He will soon grant him a great reward" (Qur'an, 48: 10).

So, when this sacred verse was revealed, did those "good ancestors" to whom Ibn Taymiyyah attributes the linguistic meaning understand that the Almighty was referring to His hand as being similar to that of His creatures and that it was above the hands of the sahaba? Or did they understand that He was referring to His power for the token of the threat it contains against anyone who reneges, that he will be facing dire consequences?

Had efforts collaborated to identify outer appearances, be they true meanings or metaphorical ones, there would have been no need for making any similitude or setting up any example, nor would have been any confusing, interpreting or getting out of what is apparent. Rather, the appearances would have been adopted in the senses through which all linguists comprehend.

The same would have taken place had they only pondered on this sacred verse of the most Praised One:

“The Jews say, ‘God’s hands are tied.’ Let their hands be tied up and let them be cursed for the (blasphemy) they utter. Nay! His hands are widely outstretched: He gives and spends (of His bounty) as He pleases” (Qur’an, 5:67).

They would have admitted that the purpose behind Allah spreading His hands is not in the physical sense but as a reference to His generosity and open-handedness. They would also have admitted the same if they ponder on this verse of the most Praised One:

“Do not (like a stingy person) make your hand tied to your neck, nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach, so that you become blameworthy and destitute” (Qur’an, 17:29).

It is then that we would wonder: What difference is there between both verses so that those who assert the attributes understand the first verse as ordinary individuals would readily do then, in order to run away from personifying Him, they follow their statements by saying "without how"? At the same time, do these folks not doubt that the meaning of the second verse is generosity and outgiving versus stinginess and miserliness?

Up to here, it appears that the views held by the Hanbalis and Asharis, in the field of fixing the descriptive attributes of Allah, the most Praised One, are based on sticking to literal appearances and individual meanings, being unaware of the fact that one who discerns the dialogues will understand the confirming appearance through paying attention to the evidences connected to the speech as understood by the Arabs, whether they agree with individual meanings or not.

Had they followed this restriction, they would have held the most Praised One as being above these bodily parts and these meanings that they attribute to Him. We have contended ourselves in this regard to explaining the three expressions: the *Arsh* (throne) and His seating Himself firmly on it, the countenance (face) and the "hand". In the light of what we have explained about the restriction, we can explain all other expressions in the Holy Quran and authentic Sunnah.

1. Al-Shahristani, Al-Milal wal Nihal, Vol. 1, p. 105. Notice the rest of his statement in this regard, for it will familiarize you with the extent of “awareness” of these anthropomorphists (who set up a similitude with the Almighty).

2. Al-Ashari, Al-Ibana, p. 18.

3. Notice our quotation about Abu Hanifah, al-Shafii and Ibn Kathir in the chapter on “the connection of confirming and

rendering”, pp. 46–49 [of the reference cited above].

4. Al-Shahristani, Al-Milal wal Nihal, Vol. 1, p. 105.

5. Ibn Taymiyyah, Largest collection of major dissertations المجموعة الكبرى في مجموعة الرسائل الكبرى, p. 489.

6. Abu Zuhrah, Tarikh al-Madhahib al-Islamiyya (history of Islamic sects), Vol. 1, p. 218.

7. Ibid., pp. 219–220.

8. Iljaa al-Awamm.

9. Al-Shahristani, Al-Milal wal Nihal, Vol. 1, pp. 92–93; this an abridged text.

10. Ar-Razi, Asas at-Taqdis, p. 223.

11. Al-bukhari, Sahih, Vol. 1, p. 7, in a chapter about iman (conviction).

12. Al-Futuhat al-Makkiyya, Vol. 4, p. 928. He is followed by Ibn Taymiyyah in making such a critique as he transmitted it while discussing the relationship between confirming and rendering, p. 60.

13. The mentor professor, may his shade prolong, has accomplished the task when he discussed interpretation in the Introduction to the 5th Volume of his Quranic encyclopedia titled Mafahim al-Quran, pp. 12–16.

14. Sharh Umm al-Barahin, p. 82. Similarly is p. 68 of Alaqat al-Ithbat wal Tafwidh (the relationship between confirming and rendering).

15. Ibn Faris, Mujam Maqayees al-Lugha, Vol. 4, p. 264.

16. Al-Raghib, Mufradat, while discussing the “sawa” word.

17. Al-Bidaya wal Niyaha, Vol. 9, p. 7.

18. Imam ar-Razi, Tafsir, Vol. 27, p. 150.

19. Ahmed Amin, Dhuha al-Islam, Vol. 3, p. 70.

20. Ibn Faris, Al-Maqayees, Vol. 6, p. 88, in discussing the “face” item.

21. Al-Saduq, Al-Tawhid, Chapter 12, hadith 10, p. 152.

22. Ibid., Chapter 12, hadith 11, p. 153.

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